

Montgomery High School

All Hallows Road, Blackpool FY2 0AZ

Inspection dates

12–13 April 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils attain broadly average standards by the time they leave. Given their starting points these standards should be higher. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs or disability make similar progress to their peers in school. However, interventions used are not yet closing the gaps between these pupils and their peers.
- Teaching requires improvement. Some teachers do not consistently use the accurate information they hold about pupils' achievement to plan learning that takes account of the learning of different groups of pupils. Consequently, not all pupils make good progress.
- As acknowledged by school leaders, learning in lessons is sometimes disrupted by pupils calling out or not being attentive. The school's behaviour policy – the 'consequence system' – is not always applied consistently.
- Leaders have shown great determination to improve the behaviour of pupils. However, in introducing new methods of recording incidents, not all records follow leaders' intentions to highlight clearly enough the concern raised, actions taken and the difference those actions made.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders provide strong, clear direction. A 'no excuses' culture permeates the school. Staff appreciate the strong lead provided by the principal and associate principal.
- Senior leaders, the trust, and the academy council have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas to improve.
- The quality of teaching has improved so that, while requiring improvement, there is more that is good, including in English and expressive arts.
- Leaders have ensured that assessments of what pupils can do are accurate.
- Strong links with a number of feeder primary schools has ensured that teachers are not repeating work covered already.
- The personal development and welfare of pupils is good. The attendance and punctuality of pupils is improving. Those pupils attending the 'reflection class' now have improved attitudes to learning.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate rates of progress made by pupils so that they attain above average standards by the end of key stage 4, by:
 - closing the gap in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs with their peers in school
 - ensuring that teachers are consistent in their use of the accurate information they hold about pupils' achievement to plan learning that meets their needs
 - building on the improvements in teaching quality so that it is at least consistently good across the school
 - ensuring that teachers consistently apply the school's 'consequence system' to eradicate remaining disruptions to learning.

- Ensure that staff follow the school's policy and record incidents, highlighting clearly the concern raised, actions taken and the difference those actions have made.

- Evaluate more sharply the difference pupil premium funding is having in closing the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders have transformed the school in the two years since it was placed into special measures. No longer inadequate, the school is on an upward trajectory of improvement.
- When inspectors visited the school in December 2015 they reported staff saying, 'There is a positive buzz around the school', 'We are playing as part of a team', 'People want the school to change' and 'We are empowered'. Such sentiments were evident in this inspection highlighting well the 'can do' attitude that permeates the school. This attitude is typified most clearly by the much improved attendance levels of staff which, in turn, has brought back continuity to pupils' learning. It is also typified by the willingness of staff to participate in out-of-school interventions to help pupils in their learning, during holiday times for example.
- As in December 2015 the reason for this positive culture is simple: senior leaders provide strong, clear direction to staff and pupils. Expectations are high and a 'no excuses' culture permeates the school. Staff appreciate the strong lead provided by the principal and associate principal. Vision and ambition are shared.
- Senior leaders, the trust, and the academy council know the school well. Their evaluation of strengths and areas to improve are accurate. Leaders, for example, are acutely aware that while disadvantaged pupils, and those with special educational needs or disability, make better progress than in the past, and they progress in line with their peers, the gaps in attainment are not closing. Leaders of these areas recognise that rather than describing what they have done, they need to evaluate what difference their actions are making, including where additional funding has been allocated.
- The development of staff is given high priority. Good use is made of good practice that exists in other schools; the principal's and associate principal's former schools, for example. The robust systems for performance management reported in the April 2015 monitoring visit have been strengthened further. Staff are clear about the targets set for them and appreciate the support and challenge they receive.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and encompasses a range of vocational and academic subjects. It promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. British values are promoted equally successfully through assemblies and personal, social and health education, for example. The curriculum for Year 7 pupils has also been enhanced through the work undertaken with a number of primary schools to support transition. Furthermore, each curriculum area has a 'transition champion' ensuring that pupils do not repeat work they can already do. Consequently, pupils in Year 7 are being presented with greater levels of challenge than in the past.
- Pupils spoken with were positive about the advice and guidance given to them regarding options and post-16 studies and work. The proportion of pupils going on to further education, employment or training at the end of Year 11 is above average.
- The trust has provided strong levels of challenge and support to leaders and the academy council. It has not shirked away from making tough decisions, including carrying out a thorough overhaul of leadership roles and responsibilities. The result is that all staff, leaders and the academy council are clear that continued improvement is the only acceptable option.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors, known as the academy council, hold leaders to account well. Over time its skills and confidence has grown. This is in part because of the challenge and support provided by the trust. It is also in part due to the good quality information it receives from the principal in his reports. As a result of its growing confidence members seek opportunities to develop their skills, for example in using information about pupils' achievement, so they can question leaders further about the progress pupils make in their learning.
 - Examples of challenge provided by the academy council to leaders include asking leaders to consider the link between pupils' punctuality and their attendance. More recently it has rightly questioned and sought answers as to why the school's use of pupil premium funding has enabled disadvantaged pupils to make better progress but not see gaps close between these pupils and their peers.
 - Through the oversight of the trust, the academy council rightly recognises that it is accountable for the success of the school too. The chair of the council meets regularly with leaders and chairs from other schools in the trust to question and be questioned. This enables the academy council and school leaders to compare and contrast the performance of Montgomery with other schools and share good practice.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Appropriate checks are made on staff. Training to keep pupils safe is up to date and includes that relating to preventing the radicalisation of young people.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has improved well. Leaders responsible for bringing about improvement have been relentless in their efforts. Variability still remains, in mathematics and science for example, but overall there is more that is good than in the past. Key to this improvement has been targeted programmes of support, including opportunities for training and robust management of performance. Staff spoken with have welcomed these raised expectations.
- The variability in the quality of teaching is the result of a number of factors. First, in the past, challenge to teacher underperformance was not always robust. Second, and also in the past, there had been instability in staffing. Both of these factors meant that pupils' learning was not good enough or was disjointed. Third, planning of pupils' learning does not consistently take into account what pupils' know already. This was exacerbated in the past by assessments being inaccurate meaning pupils were sometimes trying to learn new concepts without sufficient prior knowledge, skill or understanding. However, while assessments are accurate now, there are still some teachers not using this information well enough. Fourth, because the 'consequence system' is not used consistently by teachers, some teaching, and learning as a result, is disturbed.
- The quality of feedback, including marking, continues to have greater impact. In line with the school's policy, pupils are often given clear indications how to improve. There is an increased focus by teachers on developing pupils' literacy skills so that, for example, key vocabulary specific to subjects is developed. However, some incorrect spellings remain uncorrected. Leaders have recognised that the development of numeracy across the curriculum has been less prominent and are taking action to address this.
- Teachers use questioning well and encourage pupils to think about the responses they give. In art, for example, pupils articulated well similarities and differences between paintings by Lowry and Braithwaite and furthered their understanding of what is contemporary and what is not.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Much work has been undertaken by leaders to successfully improve behaviour, through 'postcards of praise', for example, and attendance and punctuality. Pupils spoken with both formally and informally during this inspection and previous monitoring visits were overwhelmingly positive about the school and the improvements they had seen, particularly since September 2015. They report pride in their school and are smart in their appearance.
- Attendance levels are improving. Below average at the end of the 2014/15 academic years, it is broadly average now. Leaders check and follow up pupils' attendance well, including by group.
- Pupils spoken with reported that they felt safe in school. They understand, for example, the potential dangers of child sexual exploitation through social media and the steps they would take to minimise such risk. They also know that adults in the school watch out for them and, if out of lessons, challenge them to produce permission slips justifying their absence in order to visit the toilet or take a message, for example.
- A large majority of the 40 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, since September 2015 reported that their children were looked after well. This supports findings from the school's own surveys.
- Pupils articulate well the need for tolerance and respect. Spurred on by assemblies led by the principal and challenging questions in personal, social and health education, for example, they consider maturely issues such as family relationships, the importance of shared values, community and human sexuality.
- The 'reflection class' has been particularly successful in supporting and challenging pupils who have found managing their own behaviour difficult and have disrupted the learning of others as well as themselves to change their outlook. Such pupils benefit from small-group tuition. Not only do they make progress in their learning, they understand increasingly well that negative attitudes to learning affect others as well as themselves.

- Leaders work well with other agencies to support vulnerable pupils – those attending alternative provision, for example. A representative of one alternative provision provider reported how the pupils attending benefited from the regular meetings and reviews of progress expected by Montgomery leaders.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. This is because some learning is still being disrupted by, for example, pupils calling out and being inattentive. While the majority of pupils behave well in class, the lack of consistency in the way teachers apply the school's agreed 'consequence system' means that such incidents sometimes go unchecked.
- Leaders have recognised that bullying has been an issue for the school in the past; indeed, responses to Parent View and the school's own surveys highlight bullying as a particular concern with parents. Leaders, however, take seriously any incidents. Where racist or homophobic name-calling occurs, it is dealt with and reported appropriately. To assist leaders in their efforts to continually reduce incidents of bullying and cases of behaviour that fall below the school's high expectations, new methods of recording were introduced following the April 2015 monitoring visit. These give a clear picture of who is involved and, importantly, show when parents have been informed. Nevertheless, while recording and reporting are much improved, not all records highlight clearly enough the concern raised, actions taken and the difference those actions have made.
- Pupils spoken with during this inspection and the December 2015 monitoring visit, particularly those in Years 10 and 11 were united in their view that behaviour is much better now than when they were younger pupils in the school. They point to higher levels of staff visibility at break and lunchtimes and times between lessons as a factor contributing to this improvement. The great majority of pupils behave well at these times and are a credit to their school and themselves, although a little boisterousness is still evident.
- The impact of leaders' work to improve attendance is also seen in the reduction of exclusions.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Over time, pupils at the school have attained broadly average standards by the end of key stage 4. Historical information shows that disadvantaged pupils have attained similar standards as their peers nationally but have attained less well than non-disadvantaged pupils in school. While in 2015 the average grade at GCSE for non-disadvantaged pupils was C, for disadvantaged pupils it was D+. While at first sight these historical grades compare reasonably favourably with other schools nationally, they have not represented good enough progress given the starting points of pupils. Most-able pupils entering the school with high attainment at the end of key stage 2, for example, only attained an average grade of B-.
- The picture for current pupils is better and one of continuing improvement. Across the school all groups of pupils are making better progress in their learning. In some subjects, in English and in expressive arts, for example, there are examples of routinely good progress being made by all groups of pupils. These good rates are not typical, though, and variation remains. This variation has been, in the main, because past assessments of what pupils can do have not been accurate. Determined action by the deputy principal has ensured that they are accurate now. Leaders recognise, though, the use of these assessments to plan learning is inconsistent.
- Disadvantaged pupils currently in the school make progress in line with their peers; however, leaders recognise this progress needs to be stronger to close gaps that have existed for some time and so show the school is achieving best value from the pupil premium funding. Where teachers are acutely aware of the needs of such pupils, and take steps to address their needs, good progress in learning results. However, this is not a consistent feature across the school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability also make progress in line with their peers. The school has a range of interventions in place to support these pupils; however, the difference these make is not always evaluated. While many teachers are aware of the needs of such pupils in their classes and take steps to ensure these needs are met, this is not always the case. Where needs are recognised and planned for, progress in knowledge, skill and understanding often results. In a physical education lesson, for example, the teacher had identified the need for specialist equipment to assist pupils' with their hand-eye coordination. By making this equipment available in the lesson, pupils using it were able to perfect their serves in badminton and compete well against their peers.
- Pupils attending alternative provision make effective progress because of the good links that exist between the school and providers.

School details

Unique reference number	137973
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	10010325

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.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,400
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gail Neale
principal	Anthony Nicholson
Telephone number	01253 356271
Website	www.montgomeryschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@montgomeryschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 May 2014

Information about this school

- Montgomery High is a larger than average-size school. It is part of the Fylde Coast Academy Trust (FCAT).
- The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion who are disadvantaged (this includes pupils entitled to free school meals and/or looked after by the local authority) is a little higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is just below average.
- The school works with five alternative providers for a small number of key stage 4 pupils.
- There has been considerable change in staffing and leadership since the May 2014 section 5 inspection, including the appointment of a principal – a member of FCAT – in June 2015.
- The school meets the government’s current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils’ attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- When the school was inspected in May 2014 its overall effectiveness was found to be inadequate and the school was placed into special measures. Consequently, Her Majesty's Inspectors accompanied by additional and Ofsted Inspectors visited the school on four occasions to monitor the progress leaders, the academy council and the trust were taking to improve the school. During the fourth monitoring inspection, inspectors were of the opinion that the school was no longer inadequate and therefore deemed the inspection section 5 under the Education Act 2005. In reaching its judgements about the school, inspectors took into account evidence gathered during this inspection and the previous monitoring visits.
- During this inspection, inspectors observed the school at work. They took into account responses to Parent View gathered over the last 365 days and since September 2015. They also took into account the responses of parents to the school's own surveys.
- Three groups of pupils representing all year groups spoke to inspectors about their views of the school. Inspectors also spoke informally with pupils during break and lunchtime, between lessons and in lessons themselves.
- Inspectors met with members of the school's leadership team, the academy council and the chief executive of FCAT. An inspector also spoke via telephone to a representative of an alternative provision provider.

Inspection team

Mark Williams, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Marcia Harding	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector

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