

Fearns Community Sports College

Fearns Moss, Stacksteads, Bacup, Lancashire OL13 0TG

Inspection dates

24–25 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school because

- Leaders at all levels do not have well-focused plans that will bring about rapid improvement.
- The school's leaders do not use data and information effectively to judge the school's performance, what needs to be done to improve and to measure whether they are successful. Consequently leaders are not securing improvement.
- Governors are not able to challenge the school effectively because they are not given accurate information by the school's leaders.
- There is a lack of clear, coherent and consistent understanding among leaders and teachers about what constitutes effective teaching and learning.
- Some pupils' attitudes to learning are not positive enough due to teaching that is not engaging.
- Some teachers' expectations of pupils' work and behaviour are too low.
- Too often, pupils do not learn effectively because work is not matched to their needs.
- Teaching in mathematics is particularly weak.
- Outcomes in many subjects including English and mathematics are low. Recent improvements are not secure enough to halt further decline.
- Too many pupils do not have the necessary skills in literacy or numeracy to make gains in their learning.
- Pupils' attendance is low and declining. Persistent absenteeism is not reducing.
- Too many pupils are excluded from school because of their poor behaviour. Actions taken to improve behaviour have not had sufficient impact.
- There is too much disruptive, challenging behaviour in the school that is not dealt with effectively. The school's behaviour policy is not consistently applied and staff are not clear about their role in improving behaviour.
- Graffiti and the use of derogatory language show a lack of respect.
- Bullying is not always effectively challenged.
- The support provided by the local authority has not had enough impact on the quality of teaching or pupils' outcomes.
- Parents have little confidence in the school.

The school has the following strengths

- There is an excellent careers, education and guidance programme which has contributed to almost all pupils moving to appropriate post-16 courses or training.
- Teaching in religious education, music and physical education (PE) is good.
- Most pupils feel safe in school and look smart in their uniform, including their PE kit.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of leadership and management through:
 - developing well-focused plans to bring about rapid improvement
 - making accurate use of robust evidence to judge the quality of provision and to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies for improvement
 - providing governors with accurate information so that they in turn can challenge the school's leaders effectively
 - ensuring that there is a shared view among leaders and teachers as to what constitutes effective teaching and learning
 - working more effectively with parents to build their confidence in the school.
- Urgently improve the quality of teaching, particularly in English and mathematics, so that:
 - the needs of pupils, including the most able and those who have special educational needs or disability, are catered for so that they achieve their full potential
 - lessons are engaging and engender an enjoyment of learning
 - literacy and numeracy skills are developed to a high standard
 - adults' feedback and assessment enables pupils to make good progress and develop their skills.
- Improve the behaviour of pupils by:
 - consistently applying the school's behaviour policy
 - clarifying the roles and responsibilities of all staff in improving behaviour
 - reinforcing the expectation that pupils show respect for each other, teachers and the environment and firmly challenging any prejudice-based language or behaviour.
- Rapidly improve pupils' attendance.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- There has been a lack of urgency in implementing strategies to address concerns raised at the monitoring visits. There have been some improvements as noted by Her Majesty's Inspector in her visits to the school but the improvements have not been sufficient to improve the school quickly enough. Rapid improvement has been made more difficult because support from the local authority has been variable in quality and has not been timely. The local authority has deployed additional consultants in recent months but they have made little difference to the quality of learning.
- The school does not have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can achieve or how they should behave. This results in pupils not being challenged to improve in many instances. Leaders and teachers do not have a shared understanding of what constitutes effective teaching and learning on which to base their drive for higher standards.
- Leaders and governors do not have a sufficiently accurate view of the quality of education at the school. Consequently the school has not been able to identify accurately how successful it has been in raising standards. This is due to the school's lack of reliable and accurate data and assessment information. This hinders senior leaders in the preparation of focused development plans and the measurement of their success.
- Although senior leaders have made middle leaders more accountable, particularly for the quality of learning, some leaders and managers do not have the skills to ensure they make sustained improvements. Strategic planning is not effective as it lacks robust arrangements for monitoring and evaluation. This leads to an inability to plan for actions that will make a difference.
- As a result of significant staff changes and absences the senior leaders of the school are stretched and take responsibility for more aspects of the school than was planned. This means they are less effective in raising standards because their concentration is in other areas of the school.
- The school has scheduled weekly training sessions for staff but they have been ineffective in raising the quality of teaching, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Pupils told inspectors that the use of racist and homophobic language is not always dealt with as a serious matter. In parts of the school the learning environment is particularly poor, including offensive graffiti that has not been removed. Equality issues have not been dealt with effectively by the school leaders.
- By contrast, a poignant display of ceramic poppies in the school foyer gives a stronger impression of the school's provision for pupils' spiritual development.
- Performance information about teachers is not used effectively enough to have a positive impact on standards and outcomes.
- The overwhelming majority of the small number of parents who completed the Ofsted survey on Parent View would not recommend this school to others. The reasons for this included staff changes and a poor-quality education.
- The curriculum on offer is broad and balanced within the constraints of a small school but it has not had a positive impact on raising pupils' outcomes. Pupils have vocational as well as English Baccalaureate (E-Bacc) options and an increasing number of pupils pursue the E-Bacc route (languages, science and humanities subjects). Pupils' awareness of British values is variable, with several pupils not understanding extremism well enough. However, some pupils were able, during a form period, to debate articulately the pros and cons of leaving the European Union. There is a wide range of sporting activities available for pupils at lunchtime and after school. In addition there are breakfast revision classes for Year 11 pupils and popular 'pizza revision' classes.
- The school has started a parents' forum through which parents can raise their concerns. The governors attend this forum and find it useful because they can hear about and act on issues that are discussed. The school has improved its communication with parents. However, the responses to Parent View show that there are frustrations because some parents have not received responses from the school when they have raised concerns.
- Careers education, guidance and support is excellent. The programme starts for pupils in Year 7. The careers coordinator uses a wide range of information to ensure she correctly identifies pupils who are at risk of not going to a suitable destination when they leave school. From Year 9 onwards these pupils have careers interviews focused on overcoming obstacles to appropriate next steps. They benefit from individual support to raise their self-esteem and confidence. In addition, every pupil who returns to the school following time being educated elsewhere has a careers interview as part of their reintegration.

package. The result of this is that the school has reduced the number of young people not in education, employment or training to almost zero.

■ The governance of the school

- Governors have appropriate and extensive skills. They have challenged the school to provide more evidence in support of its own judgements on the quality of education. The governors have not been given an accurate view of the school on which they can act.
- Governors were highly supportive of the headteacher through the recent reductions in staffing and restructuring of the school management structure.
- The governors and school business manager have eliminated the school's financial deficit despite the school roll falling. They have strong financial oversight. They ensure that additional pupil premium and catch-up funding are appropriately directed but they are hampered in the evaluation of their impact because of a lack of analysis of each strategy's contribution to improvement. They have fought hard to gain additional capacity from the local authority to support the school. However, although several consultants have been brought in, there has been, as yet, no improvement in most areas. Sometimes advice to senior leaders is contradictory.
- Governors take decisive action when issues are brought to their attention. For example, the parents' forum raised concerns about the safety on the bus that collects pupils from the school. The vice-chair of governors took action to contact the bus company about this matter and followed it up when no response was forthcoming.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are ineffective. Staff have read the latest guidance on keeping children safe and new staff are well trained in the school's child protection procedures. The school is well supported by the local authority when referrals of children in need are made. However, pupils and parents say there is bullying in the school which is not always dealt with effectively. Racist language is not dealt with consistently and pupils do not know enough about extremism. Attendance is too low, particularly persistent absence, and exclusions are high. These are all risks to pupils' safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

is inadequate

- Teaching fails to engage all pupils as it frequently lacks challenge. In several lessons pupils in Years 10 and 11 were being taught a curriculum that most primary pupils have already mastered. The expectations of teachers are not based on information about the pupils, which means that work is not matched to their levels of ability.
- Pupils are rarely listened to, carefully observed or skilfully questioned in lessons. This leads to teachers being unable to reshape questions and concepts in response to pupils' lack of understanding.
- Classrooms seldom have a positive climate for learning. Pupils appear bored and disengaged and so off-task behaviour is commonplace. Consequently it is rare for pupils show a real passion for a subject or for learning.
- Lack of engagement in learning means pupils do not sufficiently develop their speaking skills. Many pupils do not communicate easily with adults. Pupils are not often challenged to explain their ideas and develop their confidence.
- Tasks in lessons often lack creativity and challenge for pupils at all levels, but particularly the most able. Pupils have two targets, one a minimum and the other aspirational, but most aim for the minimum and are not given the skills or confidence to know they can achieve the higher target.
- Some staff do not adhere to the school's marking policy. Pupils do not understand how to improve their work. Inadequate feedback has led to very poor presentation of work in books which is hindering pupils from gaining valuable skills such as setting out calculations and drawing diagrams. In addition, many pieces of work are incomplete, demonstrating that pupils are not being encouraged to develop tenacity and thoroughness. Current assessment procedures mean that teachers are not always clear whether pupils are secure in their learning before moving on.
- Homework is rarely set and therefore opportunities are missed to develop good routines in working independently for the pupils.
- Pupils' literacy skills are poorly developed across subjects. Pupils often have weak spelling and limited understanding of essential vocabulary, along with poor writing skills. Plans for improvement of pupils' literacy skills are not well focused on what needs to be done. Leaders are not able to measure the impact of their work in this area.

- The school and teachers themselves have an unrealistic view of their strengths, areas for development and the overall quality of teaching. This undermines how improvement can be planned.
- In mathematics, work is frequently repetitive, simplistic, unchallenging and not related to pupils' age or prior attainment. A lack of stability in staffing has undermined progress in mathematics. This means that pupils do not have basic skills and this hampers progress in other subjects such as science, where some pupils do not know how to read simple graphs. Pupils' competence in numeracy has regressed in many instances and this was reflected in the low level of work being attempted.
- Some good examples of effective dialogue between teachers and pupils were seen in some subjects, such as science and physical education, and this notably contributed to a much faster pace of learning.
- Effective teaching takes place in music, physical education and religious education. In these subjects the teachers use their knowledge and awareness of the pupils' starting points to plan for progression and challenge. Teachers check pupils' learning regularly in these subjects and plan next steps in learning in response.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Actions aimed at improving pupils' personal development and welfare have had little impact. Too many pupils have not acquired the necessary resilience and tenacity to persist in striving for high standards in their work. Many pupils do not have positive attitudes to learning. The plans of the school to improve attitudes through a series of assemblies are inadequate.
- Pupils and parents say there is bullying in the school which is not always dealt with effectively. Racist language is not dealt with consistently.
- The form period is used to encourage reading, interest in current affairs, revision and preparation for next steps. However, this isn't consistently effective. Pupils say that they are often left to chatter, which undermines the potential of the time to support their personal development.
- During the inspection inspectors saw graffiti and heard disrespectful language, aimed at teachers as well as pupils, and this was not challenged forcefully.
- A small minority of pupils are late to lessons and this is not challenged enough by teachers.
- Good examples of pupils' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education were seen in some subjects such as English, where a discussion about the suffering of refugee victims of terrorism was prompted by a reading about the subject.
- The pupils have effective personal, social and health education lessons which effectively tackle relevant issues such as the dangers of 'sexting' from legal, emotional and social perspectives.
- Pupils who access alternative provision have improved their overall attendance and there is evidence that they are making progress. The use of alternative provision is helping them to prepare for the next stage of their education.
- The school works well with a range of outside agencies to support pupils who have special educational needs or disability and families with complex needs.
- Most pupils feel safe in the school.
- Pupils wear the recently changed uniform well, including their PE kit.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- There are regular incidents of poor and disruptive behaviour in lessons. This criticism was also expressed by pupils as a concern about the school. Staff and pupils reflected that there had been improvements recently, credited to the recent removal of a considerable number of pupils from classes, but the level of behaviour continues to be inadequate.
- The school's behaviour policy is not consistently used by staff to manage behaviour.
- A high number of pupils have been permanently excluded. The school's behaviour system does not deal sufficiently well with low-level incidents. Despite the school excluding several pupils who have displayed challenging behaviour, the incidence of temporary exclusions has not fallen. Exclusions are at the same high rate as last year and are not a deterrent.

- The use of the school's 'Diamond Centre' to reduce fixed-term exclusions is ineffective. Recent changes to the aims and rationale of the centre are not working. Behaviour and standards in the centre are poor.
- A small minority of parents who responded to Parent View had concerns about behaviour and bullying in the school.
- There is weak monitoring and evaluation of personal development, behaviour and welfare by leaders at all levels.
- Attendance is poor for most groups and most year groups and has declined in the last year. Although the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is close to that of other pupils in the school they are both well below the national average. The success the school had in encouraging 100% attendance at the last monitoring visit has reduced considerably. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is high.
- There is no clear strategic leadership of attendance. This is made worse by there being no clarity as to what the school expects of form tutors and middle leaders in relation to attendance.
- The effective off-site provision means that pupils behave well when they are there.
- At break and lunchtime pupils socialise well in their friendship groups.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- Pupils' attainment in 2015 was low. The school's leaders predict that the proportion of pupils attaining five or more GCSE qualifications at grades A* to C including English and mathematics will rise in 2016 so that the school will meet the government's floor standards. However, although attainment in English is likely to rise significantly, progress in both English and mathematics is likely to remain below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils making more than expected progress is very low. For the most able pupils attainment in 2015 was significantly below national averages in mathematics, Spanish, ICT and art.
- The progress of pupils with special educational needs and of disadvantaged pupils is very weak. Any gaps that might close in 2016 are predicted to widen again in 2017.
- Outcomes in science across the school have fallen and are not expected to rise over the next few years.
- Progress over time in subjects is variable and is jeopardised by work being much too easy for the pupils. The most able are rarely challenged to achieve the highest standards of work and this has an impact on their achievement. The lack of consideration of pupils' starting points means that the progress of the most able is weak in many subjects.
- The number of pupils who are entered for E-Bacc subjects has risen recently and this is linked to better guidance about option choices and a redesigned curriculum that gives more curriculum time to these subjects. It is anticipated that the number of pupils who are successful in this measure will rise.
- Outcomes for pupils who are educated at alternative provision are good.

School details

Unique reference number	119745
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10011662

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	386
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Styles
Headteacher	Helen Stead
Telephone number	01706 873 896
Website	www.fearns.lancs.sch.uk
Email address	enquiries@fearns.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 April–1 May 2014

Information about this school

- Fearn Community Sports College is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is well above average and increasing.
- The proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities is small and almost all pupils speak English as their first language.
- The percentage of pupils on the special needs register or with educational statements or education, health and care plans is similar to the national average.
- Above-average numbers of pupils join the school at times other than the beginning of Year 7.
- A new headteacher was appointed at Easter 2015, following a period of one term with an associate headteacher.
- There have been considerable staff changes and changes in the structure of the school in the last year.
- The school uses registered off-site provision at Oswaldtwistle School, The Alternative School, Accrington and Rossendale College and Bury College.
- The school's website does not include all the required information; it lacks information about what is taught in each subject and in each year.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons. They held meetings with school leaders, including middle leaders, the governors, including the chair of the governing body, the school's adviser from the local authority, and leaders who the local authority had brought into the school to create additional capacity.
- Groups of pupils met with the inspectors to give their views directly.
- Inspectors completed a scrutiny of pupils' work, along with school leaders.
- Inspectors evaluated documents including: minutes of governing body meetings; the school's data about pupils' outcomes, behaviour and attendance; information on the quality of performance management, teaching and learning; the school's self-evaluation document; complaints made to the school and the school's improvement plans.
- Inspectors observed pupils around the school at the start of the day, break, lunchtime, after school and at the bus stop after school.
- The inspectors considered the responses to surveys of 100 pupils, 15 staff and 22 parents.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Haddock, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
John Leigh	Ofsted Inspector
Marcia Harding	Ofsted Inspector

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