

Sir John Thursby Community College

Eastern Avenue, Burnley, Lancashire BB10 2AT

Inspection dates	14–15 June 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
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

- School leaders, including governors, have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are determined to improve the achievement of all pupils by rigorously checking their progress and supporting those who are falling behind.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. It is good overall and some is outstanding. This leads to the majority of pupils making good progress across a wide range of subjects.
- Leaders have a strong focus on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Attainment gaps are narrowing. Disadvantaged pupils currently on roll, including some of the most able pupils, are progressing at the same rate as other pupils nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability receive strong support to make good progress.
- Pupils' attendance is excellent and their behaviour is good. The majority are polite with positive attitudes to learning. Pupils take pride in their work.
- The personal development of pupils is a strength of the school, promoted within and beyond a broad and inclusive curriculum. Excellent careers advice and guidance ensures that pupils continue into appropriate education or training after Year 11.
- The arrangements for ensuring that pupils are properly safeguarded are highly effective. Pupils understand well how to keep themselves safe.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A minority of teaching does not motivate pupils to make good progress and, on occasion, is met with some low-level disruption.
- The quality of middle leadership is variable. In subjects where leadership is less good, school policies on teaching, assessment and behaviour management are not implemented consistently.
- Although school leaders encourage respect for diversity, pupils report that homophobic language is still sometimes used in school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the skills of middle leaders so that they effectively monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and assessment and ensure that teachers in their departments adhere to the school's policies on teaching, assessment and behaviour management.
- Improve the quality of teaching further so that more is consistently good or outstanding by making sure that teachers:
 - plan learning to challenge and motivate pupils of all abilities
 - adhere to the school policy of giving pupils time to review and correct their own mistakes.
- Ensure that all staff challenge the use of homophobic language.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher and his senior team provide strong leadership. They understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and have high expectations for pupils' achievement and conduct. They have put into place robust systems and procedures to ensure that pupils do not fall behind.
- Pupils' attainment is rising in line with the challenging targets they have been set. The school's own assessment information indicates that pupils are making good progress, attainment gaps are closing and outcomes will further improve in 2016. Senior leaders are very confident about the robustness of assessment information. It is based on a range of assessments that have been checked by other teachers in the school and from other schools.
- Senior leaders are vigilant in monitoring, evaluating and improving teaching. They have focused closely on improving the quality of lessons and providing detailed feedback and targeted support for staff. Consequently, the profile of teaching has improved across the school since the last inspection. The school's self-evaluation of teaching as predominantly good or better was confirmed by the strengths seen in teaching during the inspection.
- The management of staff performance is robust; links between performance and salary progression are strong. Leaders set teachers challenging targets closely linked to pupils' progress and ensure that staff receive the training they need to be able to meet them.
- Teachers value the training that they have received and feel that they have been well supported to improve their teaching practice. Most staff and middle leaders are supportive of senior leaders' drive to improve achievement, attendance and behaviour. One middle leader reflected that, while the focus on care and development had always been strong in the school, the headteacher has developed a much stronger focus on raising pupils' achievement than in the past.
- Middle leaders are involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of their departments, including through joint observations of lessons and work scrutiny. Weekly meetings with line managers have been strongly focused on pupils' progress, so making a significantly contribution to improved achievement this year. However, the quality of middle leadership is variable. Where leadership is weak it is having insufficient impact on ensuring that school policies are being implemented consistently.
- The school has put into place very robust systems for checking pupils' progress and provides a wide range of support for those pupils who fall behind. This includes an achievement leader for every year group who carefully monitors pupils' progress. These leaders are successful in ensuring that underachieving, vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils are supported by mentors and given additional guidance. As a result, the progress of pupils in all year groups is improving.
- Senior leaders are determined that disadvantaged pupils should achieve as well as their peers. They have used the pupil premium funding effectively to close attainment gaps. The funding had has a positive impact on eligible pupils' attendance, reading and progress. The school's assessment data indicates that disadvantaged pupils will achieve in line with other pupils nationally in mathematics and English in 2016.
- Leaders have had a particular focus on the achievement of those most able pupils who are disadvantaged. A series of well-targeted interventions have supported the improvement of their progress in mathematics and English this year. As a consequence, their achievement is now improving.
- Senior leaders have designed a curriculum that is broad and inclusive. It is underpinned by a genuine desire to enable all pupils to aspire and achieve. Pupils study three separate sciences, a language and a humanities subject at GCSE.
- The impact of good leadership is seen in the successful strategy to improve reading this year. There is good evidence of pupils benefiting from reading time and from the reading programme in Years 7 and 8. Pupils' reading ages have improved so that the proportion of pupils having above the expected reading ages have risen from one third to more than half of pupils. In addition, the librarian reports that the numbers of pupils using the library and the numbers of books borrowed has significantly increased.
- There is also strong evidence of success of the school's policy for improving the quality of writing across the school. This is now bearing fruit with good examples of effective writing in science and vocational subjects.

- Outstanding personalised careers information and guidance ensures that pupils move on to appropriate education or training when they leave school. It ensures that pupils are ambitious and ready for the next stage of their education or training. Staff guide pupils to move on to placements that are suitably matched to them. As a consequence, more than half of pupils moved to A level or equivalent courses in 2015, building on their success in GCSE examinations.
- There is effective provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as the result of good leadership. Pupils develop a good understanding of British values. They learn from a wide programme of citizenship that covers topics such as British politics, world affairs, democracy, justice and human rights in order to broaden their horizons. They also learn about different religions and cultures and about diversity in Britain. Their respect for pupils with perceived different sexualities is marred by the occasional use of derogatory language. Pupils also have access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities, trips, visits and speakers. A varied programme of after-school activities includes music, sport, drama, language study and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.
- Parents receive regular, useful information about the progress their child is making in the school. In the full school report, teachers identify in detail those skills and areas of study that pupils need to improve if they are to achieve better. The views of parents who replied to Ofsted's online Parent View survey are overwhelmingly positive about the way the school is led and would recommend the school to other parents.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governance of the school is good.
 - Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and where it still needs to improve. They have helped to shape an ambitious culture based on high expectations.
 - Governors hold the headteacher robustly to account for pupils' achievement, the spending of pupil premium and financial management.
 - Governors are fully involved in the performance management of school leaders and teachers.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are highly effective as the result of good leadership. School leaders have developed strong procedures to ensure that no safeguarding issues are overlooked. Four designated named leaders have been trained to take over from the main lead if necessary. Procedures to ensure that all staff and governors receive relevant induction and training are robust, as are the protocols and practices for record-keeping. Staff engage effectively with parents, carers and a range of partners to ensure that all pupils are supported and safe. Staff and governors have received training on potential areas of risk for young people, including from the Lancashire police 'Prevent' team. Staff have been made aware of how to recognise signs of pupils at risk of radicalisation, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection and senior leaders now judge it to be predominantly good or better, based on their evaluation of lesson observations, work scrutiny and assessment records of pupils' progress. In particular they identify improvement in the level of challenge presented to the most able pupils. Teaching and work seen in the inspection confirms this judgement.
- Pupils benefit from some strong teaching in mathematics and English. In some subjects, notably science, design technology and vocational subjects, it is at times outstanding, leading to excellent outcomes.
- A clear philosophy and set of principles underpin teachers' planning of learning across the school. Teachers' mostly good subject knowledge allows them to plan well-structured learning activities that enable pupils to succeed in completing challenging tasks. Such teaching provides pupils with work that is varied and interesting and questioning that probes pupils' understanding and develops their thinking.
- Relationships between pupils and adults are good. Pupils have good attitudes to learning; they remain on task conscientiously.
- The work of teaching assistants in lessons to support pupils who have special educational needs or disability is particularly effective in extending their learning.
- In a minority of lessons, where teaching is weaker, pupils are neither sufficiently challenged nor motivated and this results in some low-level disruption.

- Where the school's assessment policy is fully applied, books are well marked with helpful feedback that promotes pupils' further learning and self-correction; pupils are given time to reflect on and learn from this advice. However, the policy is not yet fully embedded and the provision of reflection time to allow pupils to respond to teachers' advice is not happening in all subjects.
- In most subjects, teachers set regular and appropriate homework that contributes well to pupils' learning. Learning clinics are held after school where pupils can access well-targeted support for any areas of diagnosed weakness.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- The school's personal, social and health education programme is enjoyed by pupils and is effective. It includes healthy living, personal safety, decision making and enterprise.
- Pupils are encouraged to make positive contributions in school, volunteering to be reading buddies for pupils in Years 7 and 8, for example, or members of the school's pupil council (known as the cabinet).
- Pupils take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. In Year 10 all pupils benefit from participating in varied enrichment activities. These include sports, music, drama, learning an additional language and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, which 36 pupils completed in 2015/2016.
- The advice, support and guidance provided for pupils coming from one phase of education and moving on to the next is exemplary and grounded in the high aspirations of leaders and teachers and their detailed knowledge of the pupils' abilities and aptitudes.
- The transition team manages pupils' transfer from the primary schools well. Detailed information is collected on each child and their reading ages are determined to ensure that targeted support is provided to ensure that they get off to a good start.
- Pupils are well cared for in the school and staff work well with parents, carers and external agencies to ensure that they meet the welfare needs of pupils so that they can flourish.
- Pupils spoken to say that they feel safe in school. They understand how to keep themselves safe and they say that bullying is rare and is swiftly dealt with when it does occur. Although senior leaders encourage respect for sexual diversity, pupils say that the use of the word 'gay' in a derogatory way still occasionally occurs.
- Staff in school maintain close contact with the few pupils who attend alternative provision and their welfare is given the highest priority.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite, friendly, wear their uniforms smartly and behave extremely well around school.
- The majority of pupils have good attitudes to learning, show respect for each other and work well together. Pupils generally enjoy their learning, take a pride in their work and are keen to do well. Low-level disruption occurs in only a minority of lessons where teaching is not good.
- The leadership of behaviour and attendance is strong. Attendance is above the national average. Leaders are tenacious in ensuring that pupils attend school. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school is much lower than average. The behaviour, attendance and achievement of pupils educated off-site are closely monitored and swift actions are taken should problems arise.
- External and internal exclusions have reduced in the last two years. The attendance of pupils who have special educational needs or disability has improved this year and no group has low attendance.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Pupils are achieving well. Most current pupils are making good progress from their overall below-average starting points and their attainment is rising.

- Although in 2015 a below-average proportion of pupils made and exceeded the expected progress in English and mathematics, the overall trend in performance is firmly upwards. The proportion of pupils attaining five GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics improved strongly in 2015, although it still remains below the national average. Pupils' achievement was also strong in science, design technology, art, physical education and vocational subjects.
- The school's information about the progress and attainment for current pupils suggests that the actions being taken by the school are leading to further improvements in achievement. In no small part this is due to improvement in pupils' basic skills. The school's reading strategy, using a graduated reading programme and regular reading time, has had a good impact on the improvement of reading ability in the school this year. Pupils whose reading ages are below average benefit from a good reading recovery programme.
- The drive to improve writing across the curriculum has also had clear impact and inspectors saw was evidence of high-quality extended writing in a number of subjects such as science and vocational subjects. Work in pupils' books indicates that they make good progress across a range of subjects. Pupils take a pride in their work and their presentation is generally good.
- Outcomes for the most able children, including those who are disadvantaged, have strong improved this year.
- Leaders have focused strongly on improving the outcomes for the disadvantaged and White British pupils whose progress was identified as being below that of other pupils in school and nationally in 2015. Current data suggests that these groups of pupils will attain in line with other pupils nationally in 2016.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are well supported in lessons by a personalised curriculum and high-quality teaching assistant support. The majority make good progress.
- The school provides a range of vocational courses on the school site, including land-based studies, the quality and outcomes of which are outstanding.
- A small number of pupils who have medical needs or are at risk of exclusion attend alternative provision at two centres. Placements are reviewed every six weeks. The centres share updates on pupils' behaviour and progress according to an agreed schedule. The pupils there are making good progress.
- Information on the numbers of pupils who have progressed to suitable education or training places indicates that pupils are effectively prepared to move to the next stage of education. The school is rightly proud that pupils go to appropriate placements after they leave the school.

School details

Unique reference number	134996
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10012134

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	993
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	S Biggs
Headteacher	D Burton
Telephone number	01282 682313
Website	sirjohnthursby.lancs.sch.uk
Email address	manager@sirjohnthursby.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 March 2014

Information about this school

- Sir John Thursby is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and therefore known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are both well above the national averages.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school uses two external providers, Coal Clough and The Heights, where a small number of pupils access alternative provision or additional support to meet their medical needs.
- The school is a lead school for computing. It won the Inspiring Career Opportunities Award and was highly recommended for their 'Action against Bullying' in the 2016 Community Education Awards.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons across a range of subject areas, of which six lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils and the school council and talked to others informally in lessons, break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff, including, senior and middle leaders. A meeting was held with three members of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of the 22 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 105 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included information on the school's own view of its performance; achievement, behaviour and attendance information; and a range of policies.

Inspection team

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Annette Patterson	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Ruddy	Ofsted Inspector

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