

Witton Park High School

Buncer Lane, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 6TD

Inspection dates

20–21 September 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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are driven by their ambition to ensure that, from low starting points, pupils achieve at least national average outcomes by the time they leave the school. They provide strong direction for teachers and pupils.
- School leaders have successfully generated a culture of high aspiration, harmonious relationships and mutual respect that is highly evident throughout the school. Pupils' behaviour is extremely good in lessons and around the school. They are polite, wear their uniforms smartly and treat each other and the staff respectfully.
- The leadership of teaching is very strong and has resulted in an improving teaching profile. The quality of teaching is good overall and some is outstanding. This leads to the majority of pupils making good progress across a wide range of subjects.
- On a few occasions, however, teaching does not challenge the more able; nor does it engage and sustain the interest of pupils. This impedes pupil progress in some subjects.
- Teachers do not always set regular homework that supports and extends learning. They do not adhere consistently to the new marking policy that would better support pupils' learning.
- The differences between the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally diminished this year as a result of the strong focus of school leaders on these pupils. Disadvantaged pupils currently on roll, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are progressing at the same rate as other pupils nationally.
- The personal development of pupils is first rate and promoted within and beyond a broad and aspirational curriculum. Pupils work and socialise harmoniously. They demonstrate both understanding and tolerance of other faiths and cultures in a modern British society. Excellent careers advice and guidance ensures that pupils continue into appropriate education or training after Year 11.
- The arrangements for ensuring that pupils are safeguarded are highly effective. Pupils feel safe in school and are taught how to keep themselves safe. Staff work well with parents and a wide range of external agencies to ensure that pupils are well cared for.
- Currently, not all pupils read widely and often enough and the programme for literacy learning in Year 7 is underdeveloped. A literacy coordinator has recently been appointed to tackle these issues.
- Although inspectors see wider personal development as first rate, in some cases tutor time is not used effectively to further pupils' learning or personal development.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on improvements already achieved to further reduce the differences between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally, including for the more able disadvantaged pupils.
- Further improve the consistency of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently plan lessons that challenge and interest pupils
 - ensuring that teachers set homework in accordance with the school's policy that supports and extends pupils' learning
 - implementing a literacy strategy to improve reading for pleasure and literacy across the curriculum and to better develop the programme for Year 7 literacy lessons
 - embedding the new policies for assessment and marking so that teachers adhere to them consistently
 - using tutor time, with its link to personal, social and health education, more effectively.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and his senior team provide strong leadership and direction. They understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and demonstrate unremittingly high expectations for pupils' achievement and behaviour. They have implemented robust leadership systems to improve teaching and to ensure that pupils do not fall behind.
- Leaders have successfully developed a culture that fosters continuously high aspirations, harmonious relationships, self-discipline and the mutual respect of all members of the school community. This culture is evident in every area of school life.
- Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is significantly below average but they make good progress. Key stage 4 attainment in 2013 and 2014 was in line with or above average. According to the school's examination information, attainment and progress at key stage 4 in 2016 have risen significantly, reversing a dip in English and science in 2015. The school's information suggests that key stage 4 attainment is strong across most subject areas. These outcomes were well matched by strengths seen in pupils' learning during the inspection.
- Leaders have been determined to reduce the differences between the progress of the disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally, particularly the most able disadvantaged pupils. Pupil premium funding has been spent on providing support for Year 11 and a coach to work with high-ability disadvantaged pupils. As a result, these differences have diminished significantly this year. The school's information for the attainment and progress of the current Year 11 indicates that attainment will rise further and that these differences will reduce again in 2017.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is highly effective. Senior leaders are vigilant in monitoring, evaluating and improving teaching. They have focused closely on improving the quality of lessons and providing targeted support for teachers. A strong programme of training and mentoring is led by teachers, for teachers. Consequently, the profile of teaching has improved across the school in recent years.
- The management of staff performance is robust; links between performance management and salary progression are strong. Leaders set teachers challenging targets linked to pupil progress, teaching and marking. They ensure that staff receive the training and support to meet these targets but are clearly not afraid to make difficult decisions where this is not successful.
- Teachers value the training that they have received. They feel they have been well supported to improve their teaching practice. The staff we spoke to and those who returned questionnaires are overwhelmingly supportive of the aims and values of the senior leaders. Teachers' positive views reflect that the ethos of the school, the behaviour of pupils, and the way that staff are led and developed have improved significantly in recent years.
- Leaders invest heavily in the professional development of middle leaders. For example, the school commissions 10 hours of one-to-one coaching for 21 middle leaders per year. Others are working for a national middle leaders' qualification. Middle leaders are involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of their departments alongside their senior leader link with whom they have a weekly line management meeting.

- Senior leaders have significantly increased the academic demands of the school curriculum since the headteacher came into post. The current curriculum is broad and inclusive and clearly demonstrates the high aspirations that leaders have for pupils' achievement. Just under half of pupils now follow the English Baccalaureate curriculum, with 40% taking separate sciences. All pupils study either history or geography and they have access to a full range of additional arts, sports and technology subjects. Pupils who have special educational needs are well supported and make good progress. All Year 7 pupils have additional English and mathematics lessons to help them catch up. Currently these lessons have a stronger impact in mathematics than in English.
- Leaders understand the importance of literacy development. They have recently appointed a literacy coordinator to increase pupils' reading for pleasure, to improve literacy across the curriculum and to better develop the Year 7 literacy lessons. It is too soon yet to see any impact from these actions.
- Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. Personalised careers information and guidance ensure that pupils move on to appropriate education or training when they leave school. There is effective provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is delivered through personal, social and health education, through discrete British values lessons, in assemblies and through a wide programme of enrichment activities. Pupils have a good understanding of modern British multicultural society. They value the diversity of their school community and are able to discuss issues thoughtfully, showing respect for the views of others.
- Parents receive regular, useful information about the progress their child is making in school. Each Year 11 pupil receives three or four reports per year detailing their progress against a target grade for all subjects, alongside scores for behaviour and attitudes to learning. Teachers explain the next steps pupils must take to improve in each subject. The views of those parents who replied to Ofsted's online survey are highly positive about the way the school is led and they would recommend the school to other parents.

Governance of the school

- The governance of the school is good.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have helped to shape an ambitious culture based on high expectations.
- Governors can provide examples of how they have robustly held the headteacher to account about the performance of departments, finances and the management of the school premises. After the dip in exam results last year they commissioned a review of the English department.
- Governors are fully conversant with the school's safeguarding procedures.
- Governors are involved in the performance management of school leaders.
- Governors would benefit from further development in relation to changes to assessment and pupil progress information.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are highly effective as a result of good leadership. School leaders have robust systems and procedures in place that ensure that no safeguarding issues are overlooked. Procedures to ensure that staff and governors

receive safeguarding induction and training are strong, as are the protocols and practices for record-keeping. Children are taught well how to keep themselves safe online and on social media, and how to develop safe relationships. Staff and pupils demonstrate a good understanding of how to identify or avoid the risk of radicalisation, forced marriage, sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The leadership of teaching and learning is a significant strength of the school. Leaders rigorously monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching, teacher planning and marking against the progress that pupils make in each subject. They have in place high-quality mentoring, coaching and training to support improvement that teachers willingly access. As a consequence, senior leaders now judge teaching to be consistently good or outstanding. Teaching and work seen in this inspection confirms this judgement.
- Pupils benefit from strong teaching in English, mathematics and science, leading to good progress in most lessons. In some subject areas, notably physical education, expressive arts, food technology and religious education, teaching is at times outstanding, leading to excellent outcomes.
- Where learning is at its best, well-established routines and effective planning help pupils to learn well and develop skills, while strong subject knowledge is used to challenge pupils effectively. Pupils learned well when teachers asked skilful questions that developed understanding and when they had a strong focus on literacy.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning contribute well to their good progress, as do the excellent relationships evident between staff and pupils in all lessons. Pupils are able to talk about their learning articulately.
- The work of the teaching assistants has a positive effect on pupils' progress because they have a good understanding of the pupils' abilities and their needs. Teaching assistants supporting the least able Year 7 pupils are used well and have a strong impact on pupils' progress. In the immersion centre for pupils who need support to learn English, teaching assistants are highly skilled. They plan and deliver individual lessons for pupils. As a consequence of this excellent provision pupils rapidly acquire English language skills.
- Where learning is less successful, teachers do not plan lessons that challenge and meet the needs of the most able pupils; nor do they motivate and sustain pupils' interest. Sometimes teachers do not take into account the different abilities of pupils, and this involves considerable repetitive explanation. As a result, the more able pupils spend too much time waiting while the teacher ensures that other pupils understand.
- A few Year 8 pupils read to the inspector with confidence and had clearly made progress in developing their reading skills since they joined the school. Pupils starting from a base well below average in Year 7 made particularly good progress in both decoding words and understanding text. However, not all pupils read books at home and read widely. Furthermore, some books read by higher-ability pupils are well below the level of which these pupils are capable.
- Work seen in books is generally of an appropriate level for the pupils' ability and the stage of their course. There are some good examples of extended writing in books and a close focus on language in English lessons. Presentation is good in most, but not all,

books. Some pupils, even the most able, did not present work well and had not used appropriate equipment to draw lines and charts.

- Where the school's new marking policy is fully applied, books are well marked, with helpful feedback that extends pupils' 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 it is not consistently applied both within and across subjects. As a result, pupils are not always given reflection time that would further extend their learning.
- Homework that extends and supports pupil learning is not set regularly in all subjects. In some pupil planners little homework had been noted since the start of term.
- The use of tutor time is sometimes unproductive. Although it is sometimes used for personal and social education lessons, during the inspection, in a number of tutor periods, pupils were mostly completing their homework or reading and there were no other opportunities to extend their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. The staff know and care for pupils very well. There is a culture of harmony and respect that permeates the school community to create a culture where pupils are happy and thrive.
- The programme of personal, social and health education helps pupils to understand the qualities and skills needed for success. Pupils learn how to manage emotions, manage conflict and to stay safe and healthy.
- Pupils learn about other faiths and cultures through religious studies and celebrate a range of festivals from across cultures and faiths. Lessons about British justice, democracy and human rights enable pupils to learn about the values that comprise a modern multicultural British society. As a consequence, relationships in school are harmonious and they listen to each other's views with respect.
- Pupils spoken to say that racist comments are not made, bullying is rare and well managed, and that homophobic derogatory language is very rarely used and very strongly challenged by staff. They feel safe in school and understand how to keep themselves safe. They have a comprehensive education programme about the risks of radicalisation and sexual exploitation. They learn about how to keep themselves safe online and on social media. Staff work well with parents and a range of external agencies to ensure that pupils' welfare needs are managed well so that they can flourish.
- The school curriculum is enriched by visiting speakers and additional projects in subjects such as science or information technology. Leaders provide drop-down days on personal development on issues such as sex education. There is a programme of extra-curricular activities including sports, drama and music and about 15 pupils are involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.
- A cohesive programme of careers education and guidance throughout the school is effectively preparing all pupils, including the most able and those at risk of disengagement, for the next stage of their education, employment or training. The last destination information in 2013 shows that almost all pupils went on to education,

employment or training. The school has identified that an increasing number are moving on to higher-level education courses. This is supported by discussion with the most able Year 10 and Year 11 pupils, who all aspire to progress to college and university, if possible.

- A small number of pupils with severe medical or behavioural needs attend alternative provision with one of two providers in Blackburn. Discussions with providers confirmed that these pupils attend well and make good progress academically and in improving their behaviour. Some of these pupils return to school but others, in Year 11, may join the school roll of the provider.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and friendly. They wear their uniforms smartly and behave around school with discipline and maturity. The school is an orderly community and the numerous staff and prefects on duty at break and lunchtimes engage with pupils in a positive way.
- In lessons pupils generally behave well and have good attitudes to learning. They show respect for each other and the staff and are able to take part in thoughtful discussion, listening to the viewpoints of other pupils. In a small number of lessons pupils do not maintain interest because there is insufficient challenge.
- Most pupils are keen to learn and clearly take a pride in the quality and presentation of work in their books. For a minority of pupils, even among the most able, this is not the case; while work was of a high standard, the level of presentation was not.
- A small number of pupils are sometimes internally excluded in the behaviour support unit. The entry and exit strategy for this unit is carefully managed and monitored by the headteacher himself. The unit allows pupils to reflect on their behaviour while continuing to complete their classwork. During the inspection there was one pupil in the unit. Expectations for work and behaviour were clear.
- The leadership of behaviour and attendance is strong, with clear and consistently used systems that pupils understand well. The proportion of pupils excluded has reduced significantly in the last two years; discussions with teachers and pupils indicate that behaviour has improved hugely in recent years. Pupils spoke of small episodes of low-level disruption but felt that it was always well managed by teachers.
- Attendance is high. In 2014/15 attendance was above the national average with no group of pupils with significantly lower attendance. It is currently over 96%. Persistent absence was just above average in 2014/5 but is currently below average, at 7%. It is highest in Year 8 and Year 10 – areas which school leaders have targeted for further improvement.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils are achieving well. Pupils enter the school with prior attainment that is significantly below average in each year group. They progress well and in recent years, since 2012, attainment and expected levels of progress in English and mathematics at key stage 4 have been in line with or above the national average, and improving year on year.
- In 2015 there was a significant dip in achievement due to a drop in attainment in English. This was caused by problems relating to the moderation of the IGCSE

coursework, which lowered the marks. In addition, the progress made by pupils in science was well below average because of early entry, and subsequent results were discounted.

- It is clear from the school's examination information that in 2016 dips in both English and science have recovered to previous levels and that both attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science are likely to be back in line with or above the national average.
- In addition, the differences between the progress of disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, and other pupils nationally have diminished significantly in 2016.
- The school's own information about the current Year 11 indicates that attainment and progress are likely to increase further in 2017 and the differences are likely to diminish further. This information is based not only on internal progress assessment in 2015/16 but on the externally marked and validated results of tests taken at the end of Year 10 in English and mathematics. These indicate that the school outcomes on the tests were above the average score for schools taking part in the tests and that the school's disadvantaged pupils of all ability levels achieved more highly in both subjects than other pupils in the school.
- The school's progress information for Year 8 and Year 9 indicates that differences in progress between disadvantaged pupils and their peers remain in both English and mathematics but are diminishing.
- Inspectors agree that in 2016 key stage 4 attainment was strong across most subject areas. These outcomes were well matched by strengths seen in progress in lessons during the inspection.
- Lower-ability pupils and those who have special educational needs or disabilities are well supported and make good progress. The school's own information indicates that progress remains strong for pupils by the end of key stage 4. In key stage 3 last year the progress of school-supported pupils with special educational needs or disabilities was in line with other pupils in English but was lower in mathematics.
- Information on the proportion of pupils who have progressed to suitable education or training places shows that pupils are prepared effectively for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision in Blackburn have access to a broad and relevant curriculum and have opportunities to take GCSE examinations. All pupils take GCSEs in English and mathematics and also take functional skills tests. The majority attend well and make good progress. Last year one pupil achieved seven level 2 qualifications. Last year, of 11 pupils in their final years who attended the Heights Free School, 10 have secured placements at college or on a 'Training 2000' programme, indicating they are well prepared to progress to the next stage in their education or training.

School details

Unique reference number	140879
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10019104

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 converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	945
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dave Hollings
Headteacher	Dean Logan
Telephone number	01254 264 551
Website	http://www.wittonpark.org.uk/
Email address	info@wittonpark.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Witton Park is an average-sized secondary school. Numbers are rising.
- The school converted to academy status in May 2014 as a single academy trust, but is currently planning to join the multi-academy trust established by Bowland High School, a small academy in Lancashire.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are both well above the national averages.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities is well

above the national average.

- 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, The Heights Free School and St Thomas' Pupil Referral Unit, both in Blackburn, for a small number of pupils' medical or behavioural needs. In 2015/16, 11 Year 11 pupils attended The Heights Free School and went on to its school roll. There are currently 14 pupils at The Heights Free School and 11 pupils at St Thomas' Pupil Referral Unit.
- The school also has its own learning support unit and an immersion centre for pupils who need support to learn English.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons across a range of subject areas. Nine lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors also carried out a scrutiny of pupil work, as well as scrutinising work in lessons and hearing pupils read separately out of lessons.
- Inspectors met two groups of pupils and talked to others informally in lessons, and at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff, including senior and middle leaders and new teachers. A meeting was held with two members of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of 13 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 30 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. Documents 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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