

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



30 March 2017

Mr Piers Tolson  
Headteacher  
Wellfield High School  
Yewlands Drive  
Leyland  
Lancashire  
PR25 2TP

Dear Mr Tolson

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wellfield High School**

Following my visit on 16 March 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in January 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that staff manage behaviour consistently well in lessons
- review the effectiveness of provision for pupils when they are excluded from lessons
- ensure that there is suitable challenge and support for pupils of different abilities, particularly when they are taught in classes where there is a broad span of prior attainment
- publish the pupil premium strategy on the school's website.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior leadership team. I also met with the teachers who lead English, mathematics and science; a representative of the local authority; the chair of the governing body and five other governors, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I made brief visits to several lessons, during which I spoke with some pupils about their work and looked at their exercise books and files. I spoke with pupils informally at breaktime. I also visited the isolation room, to which pupils are sent when their behaviour falls short of expectations. I considered the school improvement plan and self-evaluation document along with the records of monitoring activities undertaken by the local authority. I considered information about the progress, attendance and behaviour of pupils currently attending the school. I also checked the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe, including the checks made on staff appointed since the last inspection. I took into account the responses made by parents to the school's survey of their satisfaction. I read the pupil premium review and the review of governance that you commissioned.

## **Context**

The senior leadership team has been restructured since the last inspection. The school will be entering a partnership with Tarleton Academy, where the effectiveness of leadership and management was judged to be outstanding at its last inspection. You are leaving the school in August 2017. Your deputy headteacher has been appointed as head of school and will take up this role on your departure. The headteacher of Tarleton Academy will become executive headteacher of Wellfield. There have been several changes in staffing, especially in English, mathematics and science. Pupil numbers have remained stable. A new parent governor has been appointed.

## **Main findings**

You recognise that the performance of the school has not been good enough. The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 4 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016. In 2016, the performance of disadvantaged pupils was weaker than that of other pupils.

Pupils who had low starting points made the slowest progress. Your analysis of the reasons for the underperformance of lower-ability pupils in 2016 indicates that the curriculum that they followed depressed their progress. You have adjusted the key stage 4 curriculum so that current pupils follow appropriate academic courses, including studying English literature. Schemes of work have been revised in science and there has been considerable focus on 'raising the bar' in terms of the expectations that teachers have of pupils.

The school's records indicate that progress is accelerating, although there is still unevenness. In part this is due to instability in staffing, principally in the core subjects of mathematics, English and science. A variety of factors have led to discontinuity in teaching and disrupted learning for some pupils. The small size of the school means that any volatility in staffing has an effect on a significant proportion of pupils.

Together with subject leaders, you have worked hard to minimise the impact of staffing changes and plug gaps in pupils' learning. You have commissioned a range of support from consultants and involved enthusiastic trainee teachers. You have also taken steps to develop the subject knowledge of teachers who have taken on science teaching, despite this not being their specialism. You have broadened the range of support packages put in place to help Year 11 pupils prepare for their examinations. Pupils appreciate these steps, as indicated by the very high turnout to a science revision day during the February half-term holiday.

I observed teaching in a range of lessons. Some was effective and highly engaging. In history, pupils were enthralled in their work on punishments in Anglo-Saxon society and gave thoughtful responses to the question as to how far religion played a significant role in people's lives. Similarly, pupils studying photography took care with their work and persevered in refining their compositions. Other pupils enjoyed the challenge of exploring mathematical concepts and explaining their learning to each other. My findings concurred with those of a recent review by the local authority. The review found that increasingly effective teaching in different subjects is helping pupils to think more deeply, explain their ideas fully and make better progress.

There is more to be done to make this positive picture the norm. Some lessons are impaired by poor behaviour that is not well managed. Where good behaviour and positive attitudes prevail, pupils work cooperatively with their peers and remain on task. Where teachers' expectations of behaviour are lower, some pupils take advantage, by, for example, engaging in amiable conversation unrelated to their work. They do not apply themselves to the tasks they have been set. Occasionally, pupils' behaviour is more challenging, leading to them spending time in the isolation room, where they fall further behind in their work and waste valuable learning time writing 'lines'.

Pupils' behaviour around the site and at social times is friendly and sensible. Pupils I spoke to were very complimentary about the pastoral support they receive. They told me that staff help them to resolve problems and that relationships within school are strong. Several pupils told me that more is now expected of them in both classwork and homework. However, a few pupils were concerned that the very new arrangements for teaching mathematics have resulted in most-able pupils being insufficiently challenged.

Governors are ambitious for the school and committed to its future. They are optimistic that the partnership with Tarleton Academy will strengthen leadership. It will enable sharing of effective practice in teaching and learning and ensure that teachers have a shared understanding of standards of attainment in different subjects. Governors value the feedback that Wellfield receives from parents. Responses to the school's recent surveys indicate that the vast majority of parents are happy with the education and care that their children receive. However, governors are not complacent and are committed, as one expressed it, to 'building on what we do well and ensuring that our pupils do better'.

Governors requested an external review of governance and acted on its findings. They have reorganised their committees and strengthened links with subject departments. They attend training and have used a skills audit to identify any gaps in their own knowledge and expertise. A pupil premium review has also been undertaken, led by the headteacher of an outstanding school. Leaders have acted on the helpful recommendations of this review. There is a greater focus now on the roles that all staff have, including form tutors, in relation to providing the very best for disadvantaged pupils. Their attendance, behaviour and progress are monitored closely.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Gornall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**