

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



28 March 2018

Mr Peter Mulholland
Headteacher
William Hulme's Grammar School
Spring Bridge Road
Manchester
M16 8PR

Dear Mr Mulholland

Short inspection of William Hulme's Grammar School

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 2018 with Iain Sim, Ofsted Inspector, and Mavis Smith, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in April 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since the last inspection the school has undergone considerable positive changes which you and leaders, including governors, have managed very effectively. The number of pupils on roll has increased significantly with an extra class in each secondary and primary year group. To accommodate this expansion governors have increased staffing and have created an extended leadership team so that they can spread responsibilities more widely. You have ensured that the new primary building provides substantially better opportunities for learning, especially in the early years.

The school is right to pride itself on being 'a friendly multi-cultural community'. Pupils are proud of their school and are enthusiastic champions of diversity in all its forms. Throughout the school you have embedded important opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills in areas such as the house system, the library, charities, the school council, peer mentoring and sport. The 'Star Student' programme identifies and celebrates achievement in many aspects of school life, including participation in the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Vulnerable pupils, including students in the sixth form, spoke very highly of the excellent level of care and support they have received, at difficult times in their lives, from teachers and pastoral staff.

You and your staff have welcomed increased support and challenge from the multi-academy trust. This includes working very closely with the new regional director for the primary phase to address the weaknesses that the recently appointed primary headteacher has identified. Working with your local cluster of schools provides increasing opportunities for sharing best practice.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors asked you to: improve the progress of children in the early years foundation stage, pupils in the primary phase and students in the sixth form so that it is similar to the outstanding progress made in key stage 4; ensure that all pupils and students behave as well as they should and monitor all aspects of the school's work more rigorously and more frequently. You have addressed these areas with variable success.

Since the last inspection, you have implemented a new and well-devised behaviour policy. Pupils, staff, parents and carers all agree that the policy has resulted in much-improved behaviour in lessons and at social times. This view matches the school's records. It also matches the positive behaviour and attitudes to learning that I and my inspector colleagues observed during the inspection. Records and discussions with pupils show that staff deal promptly and effectively with the rare instances of bullying.

The new extended leadership team ensures that there is much more regular and frequent monitoring of all aspects of school life, especially the quality of teaching and learning and their impact on pupils' progress. Faculty and phase leaders are now more involved in monitoring. Professional development opportunities have made them more confident in undertaking this aspect of their role. Meetings to discuss pupils' progress are now frequent and more closely linked to the appraisal of staff. The monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is more thorough. This is because leaders take into account a wider range of information, including analysis of pupils' work and termly reports on pupils' progress. The new committee structure for governors gives increased opportunity for them to discuss and challenge aspects of school life in sufficient detail.

Pupils' achievement in key stage 4 continues to be very strong. In 2017, overall progress was significantly above that made by pupils across the country who achieved similar results at the end of Year 6. The most able pupils were in the highest 10% nationally for their overall progress. Despite this, you and your staff are not complacent. You ensure that strong subject specialists continue to link programmes of work and teaching closely to the requirements of GCSE examinations.

You recognise that inconsistencies in teaching hinder pupils' progress in the primary phase, including the early years. Governors recently appointed a primary headteacher who has worked with skill, energy and infectious enthusiasm in the short time since she took up her post. Primary staff speak very highly of the changes which she has made and can already see the positive impact on their own teaching and pupils' attitudes to learning. They have high hopes for the future. Visits to classrooms and analysis of pupils' work during the inspection indicated

some improvement. However, it is too early to see progress which is sufficiently rapid to make up for past weaknesses, especially in writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school is a vigilant community. The responses of parents, pupils and staff to Ofsted's online questionnaires indicate that they have confidence in the school's systems and processes to keep everyone safe from physical and emotional harm. Leaders have carried out all the checks necessary to make sure that adults are suitable to work with children and young people. Staff are fully committed to the school's policy that safeguarding pupils is the responsibility of all. Procedures to deal with allegations against staff and pupils are thorough with appropriate involvement of the local authority and external agencies.

Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and social media. There are effective firewalls to ensure that no one can access inappropriate websites in the school. A strong personal, social and health education programme helps pupils to develop an understanding of issues such as extremism and grooming.

For the small number of pupils who attend off-site institutions, staff ensure that alternative providers meet the school's safeguarding requirements.

Inspection findings

- In 2017, A-level results showed that the progress of A-level students had improved in comparison with previous years. I wanted to find out if this improvement had been sustained. To ensure teaching which is at least good you have made changes to the allocation of staff to some sixth-form subjects which have underperformed in the past. Students said that the new sixth-form centre gives them more opportunity for private study in school. They are also appreciative of the supervision of private study which ensures that they can now undertake independent work without others disturbing them. Your own assessment information indicates that students currently in Year 13, from their GCSE starting points, are making progress which is above average. We agreed that, despite being better than in the past, the progress of students in the sixth form is not as good as that made in key stages 3 and 4. This is especially true of progress in some subjects in Year 12.
- I was interested to know if there had been any improvements in reading, writing and mathematics in key stages 1 and 2, especially for the most able. The new headteacher has made important changes to how each of these subjects is taught. However, although there is some good and some improving practice, the quality of teaching is inconsistent. A considerable number of pupils continue to make the same basic mistakes as they move up the school. Analysis of pupils' work also indicated that some teachers do not ensure that previously learned skills are retained as new work is introduced. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. Too few pupils work above the standard expected for their age and too many work below.

- I also wanted to know whether the underachievement of boys in key stage 1 persisted. The school's assessment information indicates that support for underachieving boys has improved their progress in relation to that of girls. Work in Year 3 books in reading, writing and mathematics shows clearly that differences between boys and girls in this year group have diminished considerably.
- Another of my lines of enquiry was the underachievement of disadvantaged pupils in relation to their peers. In 2017, at GCSE, disadvantaged pupils made at least as much progress as their peers and in some subjects made more. Leaders in all phases have worked together to share best practice from key stage 4. They have devised plans for the spending of the pupil premium funding which identify what helps disadvantaged pupils to reach their full potential. They have put in place support and interventions which have improved the progress of this group in most subjects. However, you recognise that despite improvements, disadvantaged pupils need continued support to ensure that they achieve at least as well as their peers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching in the primary phase, including the early years, consistently promotes at least good progress so that pupils are better prepared for each subsequent stage in their education
- recent improvement in achievement at A level is consolidated
- teachers and leaders continue to support disadvantaged pupils in the primary phase so that their achievement matches that of their peers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Manchester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Liz Kelly
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I had discussions with you, the executive headteacher, your leadership team, members of the local governing body and the multi-academy trust's regional directors for primary and secondary. Jointly with you and members of your senior leadership team I and my inspector colleagues observed teaching. We spoke to a range of pupils in lessons, in discussion groups and at social times. My colleagues listened to pupils read. With school leaders we looked at a range of pupils' work. We analysed your website and a selection of documents, including the single central record, records of child protection, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan. We also scrutinised anonymised case studies of pupils currently in the school. We discussed with senior leaders aspects of safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and the use of funding. We spoke to a cross section of teachers and middle leaders. We considered 45 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 39 free-text comments. We also considered 63 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils and 64 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff.