

Lathom High School: A Technology College

Glenburn Road, Skelmersdale, Lancashire WN8 6JN

Inspection dates

4–5 December 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Over time, too many pupils have been unable to achieve the outcomes of which they are capable. This is especially the case for disadvantaged pupils and boys.
- In the past, leaders have not used additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils effectively. As a result, disadvantaged pupils have made less progress at key stage 4 than non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.
- Pupils have access to an ambitious curriculum. However, weaknesses that remain in the quality of teaching mean that they do not make good progress in some subject areas.
- Despite considerable improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, there is still some variation between and within subject areas.
- On occasion, teachers do not plan learning that challenges pupils. Consequently, some pupils are unable to build on their prior knowledge.
- Some teachers do not use information about what pupils know already to fill the gaps in their knowledge and understanding.
- There is significant variation in how effective subject leaders have been in securing improvements in the quality of teaching.

The school has the following strengths

- After an uphill struggle, standards at the school have begun to improve. Since the last inspection, the leadership of the school has been strengthened at every level.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been uncompromising in their efforts to raise standards. They have secured significant improvements across the school.
- Leaders' actions to improve the quality of teaching are having a positive impact in many subjects.
- In many subject areas, pupils at key stage 3 make good progress. This is especially the case in English and mathematics.
- Pupils' rates of attendance are improving quickly. This is also the case for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- There have been considerable improvements in pupils' behaviour. The proportion of pupils excluded from the school has decreased significantly.
- There is a calm atmosphere around the school. Pupils are friendly and polite. Most pupils show respect for their teachers and each other.
- Pupils benefit from highly effective pastoral support. They feel safe in school. Pupils report that incidents of bullying are rare.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - middle leadership is consistently effective in improving the quality of teaching across subject areas, especially in geography
 - the good practice evident in the leadership of some subject areas is shared across the school.
- Improve further the quality of teaching so that pupils make good progress across a range of subjects, regardless of the choices they make at key stage 4, by ensuring that:
 - teachers use information about what pupils, particularly those in key stage 4, know already in order to address the gaps in their knowledge and understanding
 - teachers plan learning that challenges pupils to achieve the high standards of which they are capable
 - the good teaching evident in many subjects is shared across classrooms.
- Improve pupils' achievement by:
 - ensuring that changes in the spending of the pupil premium funding are embedded to sustain recent improvements in addressing the barriers to learning faced by disadvantaged pupils
 - developing a wider range of strategies to improve the academic progress made by boys.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher and the deputy headteacher are uncompromising in their ambition to provide a good quality of education for pupils. Their actions have secured significant improvements across the school. Nonetheless, there are areas where the leadership of some aspects of the school has been less effective.
- Since the last inspection, the headteacher has made significant changes to remedy the weaknesses in leadership. These changes are having a positive effect. As a result, current pupils attend school more regularly, behave well and make good progress in many subject areas.
- There have been considerable improvements in pupils' behaviour and attendance. Leaders' high expectations of pupils and staff mean that there has been a change in the school's culture. Pupils value their education and the opportunities it can provide, and they want to do well.
- Leaders at every level have a comprehensive understanding of what aspects of the school require further improvement. As a result, they have prioritised their actions well. Those areas most in need of development have been addressed. For example, leaders have ensured that pupils benefit from stronger teaching in English. This has already secured improvements in the progress that pupils make in this subject area at key stage 4.
- Leaders have made significant improvements to the quality of teaching across a range of subjects. Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching closely. Their observations of learning inform effective training for staff. Staff benefit from support that matches their needs. They are highly motivated to ensure standards of teaching and pupils' achievement at the school continue to rise.
- Where factors such as staffing instability have slowed the pace of improvement, senior leaders have acted to obtain additional external support. For instance, following effective support from the local authority, there have been considerable improvements in the quality of teaching in mathematics. As a result, current pupils make good progress in this subject.
- Some subject leaders have made a particularly positive contribution to improving the quality of teaching in their subjects. This is especially the case in English. Nonetheless, there are some subjects where the pace of development has been slower, for instance in geography.
- Leaders have a clear rationale for the curriculum and they are ambitious for pupils. They have made the changes necessary to ensure that pupils benefit from a curriculum that is wide ranging and balanced. Nonetheless, weaknesses in the quality of teaching in some subjects mean that pupils' progress is dependent on the subjects that they study at key stage 4. For example, pupils who choose geography at key stage 4 fare worse than their peers who choose to study history.
- There is a range of strategies in place to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Strong pastoral support from staff means that pupils feel well cared for. There are visits to develop pupils spiritually and culturally. Pupils value the

extra-curricular activities on offer, including handball, art club, netball and chess club.

- During the last academic year, leaders' spending of additional funding has been successful in reducing disadvantaged pupils' rates of absence. Leaders have also made improvements in the progress that this group of pupils make in English. However, there have been weaknesses in the leadership of this area in the past. Leaders have acted to address these shortcomings and have made changes to how this additional funding is used. This is having a positive effect on the progress that current disadvantaged pupils are making.
- Leaders use Year 7 catch-up funding well to support those pupils who struggle with their literacy and numeracy skills when they join the school. The support for pupils who struggle with reading has been highly effective. Pupils in key stage 3 make good progress in English and mathematics.
- Pupils with SEND benefit from additional support. This support is monitored closely by the leader for SEND to ensure that it has a positive effect on pupils' progress.
- Following the closure of a local school in 2016, leaders managed the transition of a considerable proportion of Year 10 pupils into the school effectively. It is the view of the school and the local authority that this group of pupils had not had access to high-quality teaching for the whole of key stage 3. This has had a negative impact on the published data for the school. Prior to these pupils joining the school, leaders ensured that they were able to benefit from an additional year of teaching in English from subject specialists. This had a highly positive effect on the progress that this group of pupils made in this subject area.

Governance of the school

- In the past, governors were too reliant on senior leaders for the information that they receive about the school. Since the previous inspection, the governing body has been reconstituted and strengthened. As a result, this historic weakness has been eradicated and the governing body are well-informed and knowledgeable about the school.
- Members of the governing body bring a wide range of knowledge, skills and expertise to their role. This is helping them to increase the extent to which they challenge senior leaders. This allows governors to hold senior leaders to account for their actions.
- Governors share the headteacher's commitment to ensuring that pupils aim high and achieve well. They demonstrate an accurate knowledge of the strengths of the school, as well as those areas that require further development. For instance, they understand that in the past the progress that boys have made at key stage 4 has not been good enough.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that there are robust systems in place to check that adults in the school are safe to work with pupils. Staff benefit from regular safeguarding training. This includes training to keep staff informed about the potential signs and dangers of radicalisation.
- Staff understand the procedures that they must follow if they have concerns about a pupil. They follow up concerns about the well-being of pupils in a timely manner.

Leaders have established highly effective links with external agencies. This means that vulnerable pupils benefit from appropriate support.

- Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe. For instance, they learn about the dangers of cyberbullying and fireworks. Through assemblies, they understand the negative effects of bullying. Pupils, staff, parents and carers share the view that pupils are safe in the school.
- Leaders check to ensure that those pupils who attend alternative provision are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection. There is strong evidence in pupils' work that leaders' actions have been effective in improving the quality of teaching in many subjects. This is particularly the case in English and mathematics. However, their actions have been less effective in some subject areas.
- There are times when teaching challenges pupils. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to sequence learning effectively. As a result, pupils build on their prior learning, develop their understanding and apply their knowledge to more complex situations. This is especially the case in mathematics. Nonetheless, there are occasions in some subject areas where teachers plan learning that fails to challenge pupils enough.
- Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. Work in pupils' books shows that, on occasion, they complete activities that do not stretch their thinking.
- Following a legacy of weak teaching, some pupils in key stage 4 do not have the knowledge that they need to succeed. Many teachers are skilled in using accurate assessment information to ensure that they address gaps in pupils' learning. However, some teachers do not consider this carefully enough when planning for these pupils.
- Teaching assistants know pupils well. This means that they are effective in supporting pupils with SEND. Most teachers match work accurately to these pupils' needs. For example, they plan learning that builds effectively on pupils' prior learning in English. However, there are occasions when teaching does not consider the gaps in pupils' understanding.
- Pupils explained to inspectors that the best thing about their school was their teachers. They value the help and support that they receive. Staff foster strong and supportive relationships with pupils. This means that pupils are confident enough to ask teachers for help. Most teachers are effective in identifying those pupils who fall behind. Many teachers reshape their questions and explanations to develop pupils' understanding.
- Teachers apply the school's literacy policy consistently. For example, they ensure that pupils' errors in spelling and punctuation are addressed. As a result, there have been improvements in pupils' literacy skills. More pupils read habitually following several initiatives that promote the benefits of reading.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Staff work effectively with external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils receive help and support. Through the personal, social and health-education curriculum, pupils learn about how to look after their emotional and physical health.
- Pupils report that incidents of bullying are rare, and that staff deal effectively with any incidents that arise. Pupils and staff do not tolerate racist or homophobic behaviour. Leaders actively promote pupils' understanding of British values, for instance democracy and mutual respect.
- Pupils demonstrate respect for different faiths, cultures, backgrounds and families. Members of the lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual community feel that they can be open about their sexual identity.
- Most pupils are self-assured learners who want to do well at school. They demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Pupils arrive at their lessons on time and with the correct equipment.
- Pupils learn through the curriculum about how to keep themselves safe. They are confident that there is a member of staff that they can speak with if they have any worries or concerns. They appreciate the benefits that a small school community can offer, and they liken their school to 'a family'.
- Pupils benefit from a well-planned programme of independent careers education and guidance.
- Leaders ensure that there are appropriate arrangements in place to monitor the attendance and welfare of those pupils who attend alternative provision.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. There is a calm atmosphere around the school. Pupils move around the school building in a purposeful manner. They are friendly and courteous. Most pupils are respectful to staff and each other.
- Pupils' rates of absence are decreasing quickly towards the national average. This is also the case for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. Pupils who struggled to attend school regularly in the past receive appropriate support from staff. This extra help is having a positive effect.
- The number of reported incidents of poor behaviour decreased considerably in the last academic year. This is because most teachers use the systems for managing pupils' behaviour effectively. Pupils report that low-level disruption is rare and, when it does occur, staff manage it well.
- The proportion of pupils excluded for a fixed period has also decreased. Staff ensure that the small proportion of pupils who struggle to manage their own conduct receive help to improve their behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Provisional information for 2018 shows that pupils at key stage 4 did not make good progress across a range of subjects, including mathematics. Boys and disadvantaged pupils fared worse than their peers.
- Approximately one third of the pupils who left the school in 2018 joined at the start of Year 10. These pupils came to the school with poor attendance records and weak attitudes to learning. As a result, despite improvements in teaching, they did not make good progress at key stage 4. Staff at Lathom High School were able to provide an additional year of teaching in English in Year 9 for these pupils. As a result, they made much better progress from their starting points in this subject.
- Work in pupils' books and leaders' assessment information show that current pupils make good progress in several subjects. For example, many pupils make good progress in English, mathematics, science, history and Spanish. In these subjects, improvements in the quality of teaching are producing better outcomes for pupils. This is particularly the case at key stage 3. This is because younger pupils have been able to benefit for longer from improvements in the quality of teaching and teachers' higher expectations.
- Many teachers work effectively with pupils in key stage 4 to address the gaps in pupils' learning, for instance in mathematics. This is having a positive effect on pupils' progress and attainment across subject areas.
- Despite considerable improvements in outcomes for pupils, the progress made by boys remains an area of concern in Year 11. In other year groups it is much better. For instance, boys in Year 10 make good progress in mathematics.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is improving. Work in pupils' books shows that this group of pupils makes good progress across a wide range of subject areas. For instance, in Year 11 disadvantaged pupils make good progress in English and Spanish. In Year 10, they make good progress in science. In mathematics, leaders' increasingly effective use of additional funding is helping to fill the gaps that these pupils have in their knowledge.
- Provisional information for 2018 shows that those pupils with SEND who have been at the school for the duration of key stage 3 and 4 make good progress. This is especially the case in English and mathematics. In these subjects, work in pupils' books shows that teachers match work accurately to their needs. Nonetheless, there are occasions when teachers do not use information about what this group of pupils knows already to plan learning, for instance in science and geography.
- Leaders have acted to improve the quality of careers education for pupils. Staff are dedicated to improving the aspirations and life chances of pupils. Pupils receive a wide range of independent and impartial careers guidance. The proportion of pupils who move on to further education, employment or training is in line with the national average. However, in the past some pupils have not continued on to the most appropriate course because they have not made sufficient progress at key stage 4.
- Leaders monitor the quality of education for those pupils who attend alternative provision. Pupils benefit from appropriate courses that prepare them for the next stage in their education.

School details

Unique reference number	119774
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10057932
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	603
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Cotterill
Headteacher	Jane Galbraith
Telephone number	01695 725 653
Website	www.lathomhighschool.org
Email address	info@lathom.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 June 2016

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes to staffing. There has been a full staff restructure. The number of staff employed by the school has decreased considerably.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who attend the school is well above the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- Since the previous inspection, in September 2016 the school admitted approximately 40 Year 10 pupils into the school. This was because of the closure of a local school.
- The school receives support from the local authority. This includes support from a national leader of education.
- The school currently makes use of alternative provision for 22 pupils. These alternative

providers are: The Acorns Centre; BDS Hair & Beauty; Cast NW; Myerscough College; West Lancs Training and Learning Centre and Wigan Athletic Community Trust.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning and scrutinised pupils' work across year groups and subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils during social times and between lessons. They also spoke formally with four groups of pupils from different year groups.
- Inspectors considered 32 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. This included 29 written responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text facility. They also considered 42 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- The inspection team considered a wide variety of documentation. This included: leaders' self-evaluation, leaders' own information about the progress of current pupils and documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors met with: the headteacher and deputy headteacher; senior leaders; a group of subject leaders; a group of pastoral leaders and a group of teachers. They also spoke with other members of the school staff.
- The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority, a national leader of education who is working with the school and five members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.

Inspection team

Emma Gregory, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Annette Patterson	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Jones	Ofsted Inspector
Colin Bell	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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