

Highcross Road, Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire, FY6 8BE

**Inspection dates** 6–7 May 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to, and reduction, in staff. This was the major contributory factor in a decline in the quality of teaching and achievement.
- Compared to good schools, too few students make better progress than expected from their starting points.
- The most able students have not made good progress because teachers and school leaders expect too little of these students.
- The progress of students across subjects is variable. Most notably, progress in English and science is not as strong as many other subjects.
- In general, teachers do not use marking well enough to learn what students know, understand or can do. Consequently, some teachers do not plan future lessons well enough, capping achievement.
- The quality of work produced by some boys is scruffy and inaccurate. This happens because some teachers do not insist on their students having high standards of presentation.
- In some subjects, across all years, teachers do not accurately evaluate the standards of work their students are producing. They are therefore unable to identify weaknesses in their own work. Leaders and managers cannot confidently monitor the progress students make.
- Too many leaders and governors do not effectively evaluate the impact of their own work or that of others they manage. They do not consider, with sufficient frequency, how initiatives improve student progress or other outcomes for students.
- Evaluations of how well improvements are working are too infrequent, resulting in lost time and bigger problems to resolve.
- The attendance of current students has declined.

### The school has the following strengths

- A very difficult time for the school when it had to eliminate quickly a considerable budget deficit was managed well by the headteacher and governors.
- This school has been improving since 2013. Rates of progress are improving across almost all subjects.
- Students make good progress in mathematics.
- Some groups of students make strong progress. Most particularly the low ability students, disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- The gaps in performance between disadvantaged students and non-disadvantaged students are closing for current students.
- The sixth form is improving and is now good.
- Some very strong teachers and effective leaders provide good role models for others.
- Students' behaviour is good and almost all have very positive attitudes to learning.
- Students are safe and very well looked after.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school’s own data on current students’ progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, documents pertaining to safeguarding and external reports on the school’s overall effectiveness.
- Students’ current and earlier work was evaluated. Inspectors also undertook joint observations and reviewed, with senior and middle leaders, students’ work.
- Inspectors spoke with a wide range of students. They also spoke to a representative from the local authority and school staff, including governors, those with management responsibilities and teachers new to teaching.
- Thirty six members of staff completed an inspection questionnaire and their views were taken into account.
- One hundred and fifty seven responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire, were evaluated.

## Inspection team

Neil MacKenzie, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jane Holmes	Additional Inspector
John Ashley	Additional Inspector
Alan Parkinson	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported through the pupil premium funding is about half the national average. (The pupil premium is additional funding to support those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.)
- The proportion of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is well-below average.
- Most students are of White British heritage.
- In 2014, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations of students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- In 2014, students were entered early for GCSE examinations in mathematics.
- Over the past three years, there have been a significant number of staff changes and a reduction in staff numbers.
- Fifteen students attend, part-time, one of four alternative providers of education. They are Unity College, Blackpool and Fylde College, 4 Tech Moto and Myerscough College. While there, students study vocational courses including: hair and beauty; construction; motor vehicle and land-based studies.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to increase the rates of progress made by students, most particularly in English and science and that of the most able students. In addition, increase the proportion of students that make more than expected progress to match, more closely, proportions seen nationally by:
  - using the current strong practice that exists in the school as exemplars and continuing to improve teaching so that a greater proportion of teachers are as good as the best
  - ensuring teachers use what they learn from assessing students' work to help plan future lessons that more precisely meets their students' needs and accelerate progress
  - strengthening further teachers expectations of what their more able students can achieve and planning lessons and learning activities that will enable them to fulfil their potential
  - ensuring teachers have higher expectations of the care boys take with their work, improving accuracy and enabling them to take pride in what they do.
  - Improving students' attendance across the school.
- Further improve the accuracy of the school's evaluation of teaching and of the effectiveness of leadership by:
  - developing teachers' skills in evaluating the progress their students make
  - ensuring that leaders evaluate more effectively the quality of their own work and of others and the impact that they have on students' achievement
  - holding teachers to account more rigorously for the progress of their students
  - increasing the frequency of evaluations of the school's work so that any required improvements are minor and any underperforming students return to making good progress more quickly.
- An external review of governance, including the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management requires improvement

- Following the last inspection, the school's leadership was unable to resolve a funding crisis without losing effective teachers. The progress of students declined and, in 2013, students' achievement was particularly weak. Since then, there has been clear improvement in the quality of teaching and students' achievement. The headteacher is rigorous in holding teachers to account and is prepared to take decisive action if required to improve standards.
- However, the pace of improvement has not been consistent across all subjects. Improvement in English was not as rapid as in other subjects because of significant difficulties with recruiting sufficient numbers of good teachers. Leadership and management of English have strengthened recently, and achievement for current students is improving quickly. More recently, the progress of students in science declined. With much endeavour, achievement in science is also showing signs of improvement. The school's senior leadership and governors have managed the consequences of a significant fall in the overall budget well.
- Many leaders are inexperienced in their roles, yet they are beginning to adapt to their responsibilities. Fortunately, there are also some very effective leaders who can provide good guidance and support. For example, leadership of safeguarding, teaching and learning is strong. The recently appointed leader responsible for students who are disabled and for those who have special educational needs is making improvements very quickly.
- A small proportion of inexperienced leaders and managers are starting to implement changes that are bringing about improvement. However, they do not yet have the skills to evaluate objectively the impact of these improvements. Occasionally, the regularity of evaluating the impact of teaching and of other systems to improve student achievement is not frequent enough. Consequently, opportunities are missed to quickly and accurately correct any underperformance. Some leaders rely too much on subjective or anecdotal evidence to evaluate improvement. They do not make sufficient use of student progress and other measurable outcomes for students, such as attendance and behaviour statistics, to evaluate their work.
- The school has improved its systems to monitor students' achievement against targets that are set in Year 7. Some aspects of this system are flawed as too few students are expected to exceed normal rates of progress. This has the greatest impact on the most able students who, as a consequence, do not always make the progress of which they are capable. In addition, some teachers in English and in science do not accurately assess the levels that their students have achieved. Consequently, subject leaders and more-senior leaders cannot evaluate achievement and the effectiveness of teaching accurately. However, through good support from the local authority and the use of expertise from within the school, these deficiencies are currently being addressed successfully.
- Teaching is improving. Most teachers speak highly about recent improvements to their professional development and can describe how the most effective training has led to improved practice in their classroom. The school also makes good use of the best teachers it has to support the development of others.
- Procedures to safeguard children meet requirements and are rooted in high-quality care and guidance.
- Leaders and managers can explain how additional funding is used to improve the achievement of disadvantaged students and those students who need to catch up in Year 7. However, they do not monitor the impact of these additional resources on current student achievement and attendance frequently enough.
- Students receive good information and guidance when approaching key transitional stages of their education, including career guidance. This includes providing information on all the available options open to students after they complete their GCSEs.
- Students are excellent ambassadors for their school. Their personal development flourishes through a positive ethos and supportive culture, established by the headteacher and governors. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a real strength of the school and a good range of enriching activities support this. Students leave this school articulate, literate and socially responsible. They are very well prepared for their next steps in education or work and life in modern Britain.
- The curriculum supports personal development well. Students explore complex issues including racism, prejudice, community, conflict, rights and responsibilities. Students, including those who may be vulnerable, say with authority there is no discrimination within the school. The school is a very cohesive community and students have equality of opportunity.
- Leaders and managers monitor the attendance, safety and achievement of those students who attend

alternative provision well. There are good systems of communication between the school and the providers.

- This school has capacity to improve. It has already demonstrated improvement over the past two years. The headteacher is fully aware of areas that require improvement. Other leaders, at all levels, are beginning to make an impact on improvement and many significantly so, particularly in teaching and learning, provision for students with disabilities or special educational needs and the care of students generally. The school is welcoming of external support and evaluation.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

- While the governors hold the headteacher to account for the performance of the school, they are reliant on the school to provide them with information about students' achievement and the quality of teaching. This does not enable them to use objective data to inform their own understanding about how well the school is doing throughout the school year. Governors are prepared to take decisive action with any member of staff if their performance deteriorates significantly. The governors also moderate and make the final decision on pay progression.
- Governors have particular skills and strengths in some areas, but lack skilled colleagues that can quickly interpret educational data in detail. They have received training on this, but they still rely too heavily on the headteacher's interpretation.
- Governors know how well additional funding to support disadvantaged students has been spent in previous years. However, they are less confident about the progress and attendance of current disadvantaged students.
- The rigour with which the governors identify weaknesses is not strong enough. For example, 18 months ago governors identified an area of weakness relating to the persistent absence of disadvantaged students. Despite action being taken to improve this aspect, the attendance of this group deteriorated this year and the governors were unaware.
- The governors were very effective in quickly reducing the school's significant budget deficit and the school now operates on a balanced budget.
- Governors ensure that safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements, including suitable vetting measures are in place when recruiting new staff.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Students move around the school calmly, showing respect and care for each other. They are at ease conversing with adults. They attend lessons promptly and are well prepared. Students make a major contribution to the positive and supportive culture of the school.
- The work of some students is exemplary and most show pride in their work. However, a small number of students, mainly boys, do not take enough care: their presentation is poor and their work lacks accuracy. This goes unchecked by some teachers. When teachers set high standards and expectations, this does not happen.
- Incidents when students drift off task are rare and students respond well to the direction of their teachers.
- Students who attend off-site provision behave well; they enjoy these courses and attend well.
- Until this year, students' attendance was average. However, leaders have not monitored attendance well enough and it has deteriorated and is now below average. This is particularly evident for those disadvantaged students who have had a record of poor attendance.
- In their responses to the inspection survey, a few teachers felt behaviour was not well managed. Inspection evidence did not support this and Parent View responses indicate that parents believe that behaviour is good.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Systems to protect students, including the most vulnerable, are mostly strong.
- Students are taught how to be safe, including how to cope with dangerous situations that they may experience as young people.
- Students say that they can turn to many adults if they feel unhappy or have a concern. Students are very well cared for and relationships between staff and students are good.

- Students also say that bullying is rare. When it does occasionally occur, teachers deal with it quickly and effectively. School documentation confirms this.
- Students are happy, confident and feel very secure. Parents say students are safe in the school.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- There is too much variability in the quality of teaching to improve students' achievement rapidly enough.
- Some teaching is very effective at setting high expectations and enabling students to make good progress. Where students make good progress, teaching makes skilful use of questioning, establishes good working relationships and uses information about students' abilities to match activities to students' differing needs.
- Those leaders and managers with responsibility for improving teaching and learning understand the valuable resource they have in their most effective teachers. The talents of the best teachers are being used to help others improve. Students say that they can see an improvement in the quality of teaching.
- Where students make slower progress, teachers do not check how well students are learning with the result that lessons are not always pitched at the right level of difficulty. The most able students say that they waste time on work that is too easy, before getting to the tasks that help them learn. Weaker teaching does not provide guidance that helps students understand specifically what it is they need to do to progress. Some students say, and inspection evidence confirms, that they spend time copying text into their work books. Students are unclear about the benefit of this. There is evidence in a small number of students' books that a few teachers do not appear to care about the standard of work their students produce. Leaders of subject are not addressing this with their teachers.
- An unusually high proportion of parents say that their child is not taught well.
- Students' literacy, numeracy and information communication technology skills are well developed across a range of subjects, particularly in science, business studies and in design and technology. Students read well and confidently.
- Homework is set regularly and is usually of good quality.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Achievement declined in 2013 because the quality of teaching had deteriorated. Too many students were being taught by teachers who were not teaching their specialism or were inexperienced. Since then teaching and achievement have improved although, currently, students in Key Stage 4 make better progress than do students in Key Stage 3.
- The progress of low and middle attaining students has improved quickly. The progress of the most able students has been slower to improve because not enough is expected of them. Teachers' expectations of many of these students are too low. However, some students produce exceptional work.
- By the end of Year 11 most students in most subjects make the progress expected of them. However, the proportion of students making better progress than this is too low for achievement to be good, especially in English and science.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make strong progress because those responsible for their support and care work skilfully with them. When teaching assistants work with students in class, they find the right balance between supporting the students and developing students' skills in working independently.
- In 2014 disadvantaged students attained approximately one GCSE grade lower in English in comparison to their classmates and other students nationally. In mathematics their attainment was approximately two thirds of a GCSE grade lower. Gaps in the progress that disadvantaged students make compared to other students in the school and compared to all students nationally, are also beginning to narrow this year.
- The achievement of nearly all those students who attend off-site provision is variable. Too many of them make slow progress with the result that their achievement requires improvement.
- The school no longer enters students early for GCSE examinations.
- In responding to Parent View, a significant proportion of parents say that their child does not make good progress at school.

**The sixth form provision****is good**

- The sixth form has been improving more rapidly than the main school because it has been led well and those responsible for leadership in the sixth form have been supported effectively by the local authority.
- Achievement has been improving consistently year on year. Achievement for students currently in the sixth form is good and there is little variability across subjects. Students consistently achieve better at AS level than at A level although the gap in performance is not significant. Students also perform well in the small number of vocational courses that are offered.
- There are very few disadvantaged students in the sixth form. Their performance is similar to other students.
- The progress that students make is now monitored more closely and more frequently. This enables teachers and leaders to identify quickly when a student begins to underperform. More timely additional support and guidance is given and students return quickly to making good progress.
- Since the last inspection, teaching has been improving consistently. Long-term strategies to improve teaching have been effective because of good leadership, training and support. Teachers ensure learning is interesting and stimulating. Students say they really value the additional time and support that teachers give.
- Students' attitudes to their learning are consistently positive. They work well together, offering support, yet take personal responsibility for their own academic improvement.
- The sixth-form students are excellent role models for younger students in the school. The work to promote strong personal development in the main school continues in the sixth form. Students have many good opportunities to enhance their leadership skills and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- The curriculum is well balanced with a good range of enriching opportunities, including work experience.
- Few students do not complete courses. In the past, some students left this school after Year 11 and returned a year later to begin again their sixth-form path. The high-quality care and guidance extends to ensuring students are well informed about their next steps. Almost all students go on to good university courses or apprenticeships.
- Very few students start the sixth form without a good GCSE in English or in mathematics. Provision for those students to improve these grades is good and the students are successful.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	119813
<b>Local authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	461775

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	950
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	104
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Jesson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Roderick McCowan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 September 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01253 883019
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