

The Whitby High School

Sycamore Drive, Whitby, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, CH66 2NU

Inspection dates 24–25 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Senior leaders are improving the school and have the skills to drive further improvement in teaching.
- Students make good progress and achieve well in examinations. They benefit from a rich programme of personal, social and health education so they are well prepared for life beyond school.
- The school provides a good, broad and balanced curriculum, which is supported with good, objective careers guidance.
- The leadership and quality of the teaching in the sixth form are strong with the result that the overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good.
- Teachers prepare students well for life in modern Britain and provide them with a strong awareness of other cultures.
- Students' behaviour is good. Students are considerate, respectful and take pride in their appearance; positive attitudes to learning are regularly displayed.
- The house system provides strong pastoral support; students feel safe and have a sense of belonging to the school.
- Teachers and students build good relationships and collaborate well with each other to support learning.
- The modern foreign languages department is a thriving hub of good teaching.
- Governors are well-informed and use their expertise to provide appropriate challenge to school leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Leaders do not ensure that feedback is consistently accurate or precise enough for students to make rapid progress.
- Teaching at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is not always challenging enough to allow the most able students to make exceptional progress.
- The gap between the performance of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students is closing, but has not been eliminated.
- School systems for attendance and punctuality are not tightly focused enough; a few students are regularly late or absent.
- The best practice within the school is not yet shared sufficiently; consequently teaching and achievement are not outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across a large range of lessons. Three lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- During visits to lessons, inspectors spoke to students about their work and progress and looked at students' work in books.
- Inspectors observed students' behaviour in lessons and around the school throughout the school day. Inspectors saw registration periods, a house assembly and reading support sessions.
- A further scrutiny of work was undertaken in which inspectors sampled students' work across a wide range of subjects and all year groups.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documents, including: the school's view of how well it is performing; development planning; policies and procedures; student progress tracking; records of leaders' monitoring of teaching; arrangements for the appraisal of teachers' work; staff training logs; and records of governors' meetings. Inspectors also reviewed records relating to safeguarding, and students' behaviour and attendance, as well as reading a wide range of information uploaded on the school website.
- Formal discussions were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, middle leaders, trainee teachers, newly qualified teachers and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors met with four groups of students and also had informal discussions with students in corridors, in lessons and also during social times.
- Inspectors took into account 93 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) received in the last 365 days and 90 questionnaires completed by staff. Telephone discussions were held with three parents who contacted Ofsted about the inspection.
- An inspector had a telephone conversation with representatives of Access To Employment and a local Skoda dealership, which work with the school to provide a range of alternative provision.

Inspection team

Dawn Platt, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jane Holmes	Additional Inspector
David Woodhouse	Additional Inspector
Colin Mason	Additional Inspector
Clive Hurren	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Whitby High School is a larger-than-average comprehensive school with a sixth form.
- Most students are of White British heritage. The majority of students speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students identified by the school as disabled or as having special educational needs is similar to the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the school is similar to the national average. The term disadvantaged pupils is used to describe those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority. These pupils receive additional support from the pupil premium funding.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- A small number of students attend off-site provision at a number of providers including Access to Employment and West Cheshire College.
- The school holds a number of awards including, the Arts Mark Gold, International Schools Award, Investor of People award, and the Healthy Schools Award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - middle and senior leaders check and improve the quality of written feedback provided to students in order to ensure that accurate, effective dialogue supports further student progress
 - actions are taken to effectively share good practice across the school to further deepen teachers' skills
 - effective systems in school are in place to improve and maintain attendance and punctuality, in particular for vulnerable students.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning further by ensuring that:
 - the most able students are frequently challenged so that they make even faster progress in their learning
 - disadvantaged students make better progress so that the attainment gap between them and non disadvantaged students nationally is narrowed further within English and mathematics
 - teachers check students' understanding more effectively during lessons to help plan new learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders know the school well and recognise its strengths and priorities. The headteacher and senior leaders reflect critically on students' patterns of achievement and are building stronger systems to improve rates of students' progress and raise attainment.
- Leaders have developed rigorous systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning; their judgements about the quality of teaching are largely secure although occasionally they do not take enough account of the impact of teaching on students' learning over time.
- Senior leaders monitor and support middle leaders effectively in their evaluation and reflections; they discuss future improvement plans and agree how these will be checked. Middle leaders find this support helpful in developing their leadership skills and processes.
- Middle leaders make a good contribution to school improvement and use data effectively to track student progress. They offer a wide range of support to allow students to make gains in their learning; however, they do not always thoroughly check and improve the quality of teachers' written feedback to ensure that students make the most rapid progress.
- The pastoral leaders provide caring and effective support for students so they are happy and enjoy school. They are also involved in tracking progress and galvanizing improvement by securing effective support for individual students.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students are keen to learn about different cultures and faiths. The school has established good links with schools in Spain and Zimbabwe that enable students to form relationships with peers and develop their global awareness.
- The school's website is detailed and is a good source of information and guidance for parents and students.
- Leaders ensure that students have a range of opportunities to strengthen personal, social and health education by providing external visits, relevant speakers, workshops, international links with seven countries and a stimulating programme of lessons. For example, Year 9 students study and explore fair trade and consider the ethical issues surrounding the treatment of refugees. Their learning through these topics helps to develop their moral awareness.
- Senior leaders have driven a Key Stage 3 curriculum review since the last inspection. Time to study English, mathematics and humanities has been increased to boost students' academic achievement. Study skills lessons for Year 7 students help them to be better learners. Additional support is provided for vulnerable students so that they catch up on any lost ground.
- The Key Stage 4 curriculum has been re-shaped to enable more time for English and mathematics through an increase in teaching time per subject. The curriculum is broad and varied with a range of academic and vocational subjects offered in close discussion and liaison with parents and students. Aspirations for careers have been raised, particularly for the most able students; there has been an increase in the number of students following separate science courses.
- A small number of students in Year 11 are educated off-site at alternative provision; leaders work closely with providers and check systematically on their attendance, safety and progress.
- The school is committed to developing students' understanding of the world of work. All students are encouraged to take part in quality work experience during Years 10 and 12. Commitment to work experience from students and staff is strong and it runs alongside well-structured impartial careers advice to support students' next steps.
- The school has well-organised arrangements for supporting the arrival of Year 7 students when they make their transition from primary education. Leaders' communication with primary schools is good and the school provides effective summer learning support programmes, which boost the attainment of students before they start Key Stage 3. The science department operates a project to engage students and this improves their understanding of scientific enquiry.
- School leaders have been proactive in seeking professional development from other schools and this has supported leaders with curriculum changes and developments. The school is increasingly popular in the community and parents who made their views known during the inspection are positive about the quality of education that their children receive.
- Staff are held to account for their performance. Teachers' impact on students' progress is closely linked to pay progression.
- Staff are provided with appropriate professional development throughout the school year, for example

they receive regular updates on safeguarding and positive discipline relationships for learning. Leaders recognise the need to develop more bespoke training arrangements to ensure that they meet the needs of all staff.

- All aspects of safeguarding, including those related to the appointment of staff, are monitored meticulously.
- Leaders promote equality of opportunity and this is seen in the already positive impact of results among different groups of learners.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are experienced and hugely supportive of the school and its leadership.
 - Governors have a keen eye for school development and are linked to curriculum areas to further strengthen involvement. They understand how well the school is doing through their analysis of achievement data, curriculum reviews and regular meetings.
 - Governors challenge leaders and hold them to account by asking the right questions about the school's work; they work effectively alongside leaders to support improvement.
 - Governors contribute fully to the appraisal arrangements for teachers. They work with senior leaders to decide teachers' salary progression and reward those who perform well. Governors support the leaders' actions in addressing under-performance.
 - Governors ensure that school's resources and finances are well planned. They are aware of how pupil premium funding is spent. They monitor the progress of disadvantaged students and recognise that, although gaps are narrowing, this aspect of the school's work needs to remain as a key focus.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students are considerate, respectful and courteous to each other. They take pride in their appearance and in their school.
- Students' behaviour as they move between lessons is sensible and orderly, despite congested corridors. Students and staff show tolerance and this contributes to a predominately calm environment.
- Students arrive to lessons equipped for learning. They are generally keen to work; however, where teaching is not engaging they can sometimes lose interest
- Students feel rewarded in school for their work and for making the right choices. The school uses regular celebration assemblies and identifies 'student of the week', an award which has considerable kudos.
- Students report few instances of bullying and say that these are dealt with effectively by school systems; students know that they can use an online reporting system to receive support with bullying.
- The school effectively uses the house system to encourage leadership skills and promote British values. For example, students vote for form captains and each house raises money for a specific charity on an annual basis, which helps to develop students as proactive and caring young citizens.
- Leadership is promoted and well developed among Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5, for example students who wish to can become form representatives, members of the school council and prefects. The sixth-form students have a positive impact on behaviour, in particular through their role as student duty officers within school. Student leadership opportunities are not as deeply embedded at Key Stage 3.
- Attendance and punctuality of students has started to improve, particularly for students with special educational needs. However, the school does not track and monitor different groups of students sharply enough so rapid improvement is limited. The school systems for attendance and punctuality are not always tightly focused to ensure that interventions are consistently successful; consequently, some students continue to be late or have erratic attendance. The school has started to use a family support officer to improve attendance. The attendance of students who are educated at off-site provision is good.
- The rate of student exclusion for poor behaviour has fallen; however, exclusion levels remain broadly average and are uneven for different groups of students.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. This is also the case when they attend alternative provision.
- The school works hard to keep students safe. Discussions with students reveal that they feel safe in school and are positive about the ways in which they are taught to be safe. The school promotes safety in a variety of engaging ways, such as through the use of a visiting drama company at Key Stage 4 to deliver information on e-safety including 'sexting'. Subjects such as science and computing promote safety well.

- The house system provides strong pastoral support. Staff provide a 'family approach' characterised by clear systems to meet the pastoral and academic needs of students. The school's leaders provide systems and structures to ensure that students are safe in all activities. Risk assessments and regular monitoring are in place with regard to all key aspects of safety.
- Arrangements for the safeguarding of students, including checks on the recruitment of staff, are rigorous and monitored regularly and closely. All staff, including those recently appointed, have received statutory safeguarding training and are knowledgeable about the procedures to be followed if any concerns arise.
- Inspection evidence supports the view expressed by the majority of parents that their children feel safe and well cared for by the school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers command respect in their classes and build good relationships with students to support learning. Students listen to and respond to teachers and collaborate with each other well.
- Teachers question students effectively, enabling them to build on their previous learning. However, teachers do not always check students' understanding rigorously enough in lessons to make sure all are making the most rapid progress possible.
- Students make very good gains in their knowledge and skills in the sixth-form, and in English and modern foreign languages throughout the school, where teaching is particularly vibrant and engaging.
- Students' work is challenging enough to make sure all students make good progress. Teachers monitor students' progress and provide effective support to students who need more help. However, teaching at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 does not always provide enough challenge to make sure the most able students make the most rapid progress.
- Homework is set appropriately within subject areas. There are some highly effective approaches such as the use of homework booklets in humanities and the use of online homework in mathematics. However, homework is not always tracked for impact throughout the school.
- There are some excellent examples of written feedback in students' books that lead to clear gains in learning. For example, the use of key spellings in mathematics, history and English books supports students' understanding, and detailed feedback on science assessments is linked to next steps for students' progress. However, there is some variability; staff expectations are not always aspirational and some feedback is not as effective in helping students to make rapid progress.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students generally enter the school with prior attainment that is similar to the national average. The proportion of students who attain five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, at the end of Key Stage 4 is above average. This represents good achievement over time.
- The school's inclusive approach leads to virtually all students gaining five or more GCSE qualifications at grades A* to G. The school's attainment at this threshold is significantly better than that found nationally.
- Attainment at GCSE in English and mathematics has been higher than the national figure during the last two years.
- Attainment and progress in modern foreign languages is a strength of the school.
- Disadvantaged students attained just over a third of a grade lower in English and approximately two-thirds of a grade lower in mathematics at GCSE, when compared with other students in school in 2014. When their attainment is compared to other students nationally, they attained just over a grade lower in English and approximately a grade and a half lower in mathematics.
- The school's data indicate that gaps in performance between disadvantaged students and their peers are narrowing as a result of good teaching and closer tracking by leaders at all levels.
- More students are now exceeding expected progress from their relative starting points in English and mathematics. Rates of progress are now in line with those found nationally.
- The most able students in 2014 attained particularly high standards in art and design, business studies, applied science and health and social care. However, not all made strong progress from their starting points across all subjects.
- Students in Key Stage 3 generally make good progress in English and mathematics and are therefore well equipped to start their GCSE courses.
- In their GCSE examinations in 2014, girls achieved one third of a grade better than boys on average. Leaders are tackling boys' underachievement successfully across the school.

- Students with lower starting points, disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers nationally. Students with special educational needs are set high targets and staff work effectively together to provide them with support.
- The most able students, who were entered early for their GCSE examinations in English and mathematics, did not achieve the best possible results in 2014 in mathematics. The school has discontinued its practice of early entry.
- A small number of students in Years 11 are educated in off-site alternative provision. Senior leaders' monitoring shows that these students are making expected progress.
- Students who enter the school with lower reading ages make good progress due to the effective use of reading strategies and resources across the school.

The sixth form provision

is good

- The leadership of the sixth form is good. Leaders are focused and use data rigorously to monitor students and to keep parents and students informed of progress.
- Students are able to choose academic or vocational pathways, or a combination of both, within the wide curriculum available to them; their choices are supported by good guidance as to which programme best suits their abilities and aspirations.
- The school works hard to support students moving into varied post-16 provision, including their own sixth form, through assemblies, personal interviews and consultations, which provide parents and students with a clear understanding to underpin students' choices. The school's sixth form is sustainable and stable.
- Retention rates for students moving into Year 13 show a positive trend; strategies for matching students to courses have a positive impact on student outcomes.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is good. Sixth-form students are valued members of the school community. They grasp at opportunities to gain responsibility. Many contribute to the supervision and development of younger students, for example, by offering reading support to Year 7 students.
- Students in the sixth form are shining ambassadors for younger children in the school and reflect high moral values with their support provided in the house systems. Sixth-formers organise fundraising for the local and wider community with notable success.
- Students who enter the sixth form without English and mathematics at GCSE are supported and taught well; consequently, pass rates when they re-sit their examinations are higher than national rates.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good in most subjects and teachers have high expectations.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Students make above average progress in AS level and also in BTEC level 3 courses. The progress for A-level entry is around the national average. There is a sustained trend over time of students making good progress from their starting points.
- Good careers advice is provided and this is reflected in the increasing number of students gaining university places or gaining employment or training.

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

Unique reference number	111429
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	453389

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,534
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Cooper
Headteacher	Mr B Heeley
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2011
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