

# Ormskirk School

Wigan Road, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 2AT

**Inspection dates** 17–18 October 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Students achieve well and the school's results are well above average. Many students make outstanding progress in mathematics and their progress in English is improving strongly. There is a vigorous drive to improve students' literacy skills across the curriculum.
- The sixth form is good. Students are proud to give their help in the main school. They achieve well and go on to the higher education or training of their choice.
- Students attend regularly, behave considerably, feel safe and thoroughly enjoy school.
- The school works very well with the local community. Parents recognise and appreciate the significant improvements that have been made since the previous inspection.
- Most teachers have good subject knowledge and plan imaginative lessons that capture students' interest. They manage their classes well and willingly give their time to support any student who needs extra help.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors believe that only the best is good enough. They know every aspect of the school in detail and are doing the right things to make it even better.
- The school's arts specialism inspires students' creativity, deepens their understanding of other cultures and gives them excellent opportunities to share their work with the wider community.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some middle-ability boys do not make strong enough progress in English.
- A few teachers do not plan lessons that cater well for the abilities of all students in their classes.
- Students' written work is sometimes poorly presented.
- Some teachers' marking does not give students clear enough advice on how to improve their work, including their spelling, punctuation and grammar.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 49 lessons, of which seven were joint observations with the school’s senior leaders. They also attended assemblies, observed registration sessions, watched part of the school’s drama production and listened to students reading.
- Six groups of students, including students who receive part of their education off site, met with inspectors. Discussions were also held with school staff, including senior leaders, heads of department, heads of year, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors. Inspectors also met with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at 222 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They also considered the views given by parents in the school’s own surveys, read correspondence received from parents and held telephone discussions with two parents who have attended the school’s parent consultation group. They analysed 67 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors read a range of documents including the school’s self-evaluation, improvement plan, monitoring reports, behaviour logs and records in relation to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Shirley Gornall, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Kath Harris	Additional Inspector
Sheila Kaye	Additional Inspector
Mary Liptrot	Additional Inspector
Lenford White	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized secondary school. The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority, is low at around half the national average, but rising. The vast majority of students are White British and virtually all students speak English as their first language. The student population is stable and the sixth form is well subscribed.
- The proportion of students identified as disabled or with special educational needs and supported through school action and school action plus is much lower than found nationally. Very few students have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school has specialist status for visual and performing arts and is involved in a range of local partnerships, including with Edge Hill University.
- A small number of students in Key Stage 4 is educated off site for some lessons. Of these, the majority follow courses in joinery, bricklaying and plastering at a Training and Learning Centre established by a consortium of schools in West Lancashire. A small group studies hairdressing and beauty courses at West Lancashire College and at an alternative provider, B-D-Stressed. A similar number study a motor vehicle course at the college. Two students attend Acorns Centre, the local Pupil Referral Unit, full time.
- The school meets the government's floor standard, which is the minimum expected for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Increase the proportion of middle-ability boys making expected progress in English by:
  - giving students sufficient time and guidance to develop their extended writing
  - insisting that students present their work as neatly as possible.
- Improve teaching so that more is as good as the best in school by:
  - checking that teachers' marking consistently provides students with specific advice on how to improve their work, and that all teachers help students to improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar
  - improving the quality of opportunities for students to give feedback on each other's work so that they are effective in deepening students' understanding
  - making sure that all teachers provide lessons that meet the needs of students of different abilities within their classes.
- Maintain the school's vigorous drive to improve literacy standards in all subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school with above-average standards in most subjects. The standards they reach at GCSE are well above those found nationally and have risen strongly over the last three years. The vast majority of students achieve five GCSE qualifications at grades A\* to C, and over three quarters achieve five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics. Around one third of grades achieved by students are at A\* and A, and this shows good progress in a wide range of subjects,
- Students who are eligible for pupil premium funding achieve significantly better than students nationally in this group. The school's careful use of this funding, including for individual or small group tuition, summer school and visits, is raising achievement for eligible students, and the gap between their achievement and that of their peers in school is closing.
- Students make consistently good and often outstanding progress in mathematics. Their progress in English has been weaker but has improved significantly due to a better scheme of work, determined leadership and good teaching. Girls achieve very well in English but the progress of middle-ability boys is not rising as strongly.
- The progress made by students who are disabled or with special educational needs is good. Staff know how to help them learn and they provide regular updates on their progress to parents.
- The small percentage of students studying courses at colleges or at the short-stay school achieve well. They enjoy their courses, attend regularly and make good progress. Senior leaders monitor their work closely, including through visits to observe their work off site by the headteacher and other senior staff.
- The notable, sustained rise in achievement is due to the school's relentless drive to improve teaching and learning. Students' progress is tracked thoroughly and any student at risk of underachievement is quickly identified and supported.
- The school has considered its use of early entry for GCSE mathematics and English very carefully. Those students who take the examinations early but do not attain their ambitious target grades continue to study and resit the papers at a later date. Those students who achieve top grades in mathematics at early entry go on to take additional mathematics qualifications in preparation for sixth-form study.
- Students achieve well in the sixth form in the broad range of subjects the school offers. Their achievement in applied A-level courses is particularly impressive. The progress of sixth-form students is carefully monitored and support is provided quickly and effectively for any individual whose achievement dips. Consequently, virtually all students attain the grades required for entrance to their chosen universities or employment.
- Most students are keen readers. The school actively encourages reading for pleasure. Good support helps students with lower reading ages to catch up quickly. Students' writing is sometimes hampered by poor presentation and insufficient attention to spelling, punctuation and sentence construction. This is more apparent in the work of boys than girls. Mathematical concepts are emphasised well in science subjects. Students who study bricklaying and joinery at the Training and Learning Centre say that they have good opportunities to apply their numeracy skills in practical ways.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Much is good, some is outstanding and a small amount requires improvement. Most lessons are well-planned, well paced, varied and interesting. Most teachers ask probing questions to ensure that their students have to think hard throughout the lesson. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and this gives students confidence to answer in class.
- There are examples of outstanding teaching in most departments. This is shown in teachers'

creativity and ability to get students to understand challenging ideas. In art, teachers encourage students to think in detail about how different artists work as a starting point for their own compositions. In history, students make outstanding progress when teachers help them to read historical documents and discuss pictures showing complex historical events. Science teachers make lessons lively by asking students to make models to show their understanding of difficult topics such as the nervous system. Well-presented displays of students' work can be found throughout the school. They help students to feel good about their achievements and celebrate their success.

- On a few occasions, teaching requires improvement. This is sometimes because teachers' planning does not take into account the different ability levels of all students in the class. In these lessons, students remain interested in their work but do not make as much progress as they might because their tasks are either too difficult or too easy.
- The school has introduced a new marking policy. Teachers explain 'what went well' and 'even better if' when they mark students' work. Students use the same phrases when they talk about their own work. Some marking, in a range of subjects, is very effective because it gives clear guidance to students on how to improve their work. However, on other occasions points for improvement are not precise enough to help students make more progress. Not all teachers pick out literacy errors when they mark students' work and this leads to mistakes continuing unnecessarily. School leaders know this is a weakness and are providing training for all staff on how to develop students' literacy skills.
- Students regularly assess their own work and that of their classmates. Sometimes this works very well, such as in an outstanding English lesson where students read a GCSE essay in detail, considered how an examiner would grade it and drew out very specific points for improvement. This activity was an effective basis for improving students' own critical writing. On other occasions, students' feedback is sought at points in lessons when there is insufficient work to be assessed meaningfully and this slows learning.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The school's vibrant arts specialism makes a major contribution to students' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school's ambitious productions involve substantial teamwork and perseverance, with inspirational results that delight the community. Students encourage each other in their work in different subjects and provide sensitive feedback. They think about important world issues in assemblies and religious education. Students know right from wrong and understand what it is to be a good citizen. Mosaics made by students on Olympic themes such as respect show their understanding vividly. The school values people equally. Discrimination is not tolerated in any form.
- Students are usually sensible and courteous in lessons and as they move around the school. They think that the school's rules are fair and that staff enforce them in the same way. Bullying, including homophobia and racism are openly discussed in school. Students say that bullying is rare and have confidence that staff are able to help them with any problems they might experience. The vast majority of parents agree that behaviour in the school is good and that the school's procedures for dealing with bullying are effective. Students' attendance has risen and is above average. The school works hard to help students and their families resolve problems that might lead to absence, and the number of students who are persistently absent from school is decreasing. Good attendance is rewarded and students are clear about the links between attendance and achievement. Most students arrive punctually to school and to lessons. Initiatives such as 'the punctuality Olympics' have helped to improve their timekeeping.

**The leadership and management are good**

- One student commented, 'The headteacher cares about and knows who we are as people.' This view is shared by many others, including sixth formers who receive his guidance in writing their personal statements for university application. He is a regular visitor to lessons, including those taught off site. He has an accurate picture of the quality of teaching in school.
- Senior leaders see their first duty as improving teaching. They work closely with heads of subject and heads of year to make sure that everyone is clear about expectations. Their evaluation of the school is honest, accurate and used as the basis for improvement planning. Teaching is regularly reviewed, through lesson observations, discussions with students and examination of their work and planners. Heads of department know what works well in their subjects and make sure that good practice is shared. They report regularly to the governors on what they are doing to raise standards. Performance management is used rigorously. Teachers only receive additional pay awards if their work is of a high enough quality.
- The school is committed to developing teachers' skills further, including through weekly training sessions and by teachers watching each other's lessons. New teachers to the school feel well-supported.
- The school has recognised the need to continue improving the teaching of literacy across the curriculum and has developed ambitious plans, including family reading. This work is not yet embedded. Some staff do not do everything possible to help students to improve their literacy skills. The school's plan includes the right steps to drive improvement in this area.
- Senior leaders think carefully about how to make effective use of available funding, including the pupil premium. The proportion of students in Year 7 eligible for this funding is higher than in previous years and a summer school was provided to help them make the transition from primary school. This gave teachers good early knowledge of students' individual abilities and enabled additional tuition to be planned early, with the result that students have settled into school quickly and are making good progress.
- School leaders have developed very good relationships with parents, including through a parents' consultation group where issues of importance to parents are discussed openly. One parent commented, 'The school has improved massively. We know what is going on and how we can help.' Child protection and safeguarding arrangements meet current guidelines and discrimination is not tolerated.
- The school is well set to improve further. The morale of staff and students is high. The right people are in post to take the school from strength to strength.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Members of the governing body visit the school regularly and know the staff well. They give their time generously and bring their individual professional expertise and personal skills to the school.
  - The governing body has a clear understanding of performance data and uses this to ask searching questions of senior leaders and heads of department. Members have a good understanding of the quality of teaching in the school.
  - The governing body ensures that the school's performance management arrangements are rigorous, fair and objective. Consequently, teachers' progression and pay are clearly linked to improvements in students' achievement.
  - Members monitor the school's budget closely and ensure that the school provides good value for money. This includes monitoring how pupil premium money is spent.
  - The governing body has researched best practice in governance and applied these principles to their own work. Statutory responsibilities, including safeguarding are met.

## 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>	132834
<b>Local authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	402560

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 Controlled
<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>	1404
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	259
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr G Slawinski
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr J Doyle
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 February 2010
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