

Failsworth School

Brierley Avenue, Failsworth, Manchester, M35 9HA

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Middle and higher ability students do not make enough progress.
- Teaching in the school is too variable. In some lessons, activities are not well enough matched to students' capabilities.
- Behaviour requires improvement; in a few lessons some students lose interest, become distracted and disrupt the learning of others.
- Leaders place too much emphasis on students reaching grade C at GCSE; there has not been enough focus on encouraging them to achieve the higher grades.
- Leaders do not evaluate the progress students make with enough rigour and have not identified and acted on the underperformance of some students quickly enough.
- Senior leaders' analyses of how well the school is doing are not sufficiently rigorous. As a result, the plans they have for improving the school are not sharp enough.

The school has the following strengths

- The school's provision for students who require extra help with their learning is good. The support they receive is tailored to meet their needs.
- The headteacher, ably supported by a committed team of leaders and managers, is helping the staff understand what they need to do to improve the quality of their teaching.
- The governing body and new Chair of Governors provide good support and are robust in holding leaders to account for the school's performance.
- Students feel safe in school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 50 part-lessons taught by 50 different teachers. Joint observations of lessons were also carried out with two senior and two middle leaders.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, groups of teachers and a range of students of differing ages.
- Telephone conversations were held with representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in the 52 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) survey and the 47 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Students' work was examined as were the school's key policies, minutes of governing body meetings, the school's analysis of how well it is doing and its improvement plan. Information about students' progress was also analysed.

Inspection team

Charles Lowry, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Additional Inspector
Gary Kelly	Additional Inspector
Steven Goldsmith	Additional Inspector
Kathleen Yates	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Failsworth is a larger than average comprehensive school located in Oldham, about five miles to the north east of Manchester City Centre.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, children of parents serving in the armed forces and for students who have an entitlement to free school meals.
- Most students are of White British heritage with few students from other backgrounds; consequently the vast majority of students speak English as their first language.
- The number of students who require extra help with their learning including those supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- Small groups of students in Years 10 and 11 attend Oldham College or Skill Force where they take qualifications related to the world of work. A few students attend other off-site providers, for example the Gateway Centre, that offer a range of courses including those related to personal development, English and mathematics.
- The school is a member of the Failsworth Learning Partnership; which is committed to providing learning opportunities for members of the Failsworth community.
- The school holds the following awards: Sport England Sportsmark, Artsmark, Healthy Schools, Information Advice and Guidance, the International Schools Intermediate Award and Investors in People.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently at least good and all students make good progress by:
 - making sure that teachers plan activities that will challenge students and make them think, particularly students of middle and higher ability
 - making sure that all teachers give students regular feedback on their work; letting them know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve it
 - making sure that teachers do not talk too much and instead give students more time to work independently and find things out for themselves.
- Eliminate disruptive behaviour in those lessons where it occurs by, ensuring that students are given activities to do which they find interesting and motivating.
- Strengthen the impact of leaders' actions on achievement by:
 - sharpening the ways they assess how well the school is performing so that they can measure the impact of the actions they are taking
 - making sure that they use all of the up-to-date information available to gauge how well students are progressing, particularly students of middle and higher ability.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students arrive in Year 7 with at least average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Year-on-year an increasing proportion of students have achieved above average results when they leave in Year 11. As a consequence, in 2012, almost all students gained five passes at GCSE. However middle and higher ability students did not achieve as well as they might because fewer than expected achieved the higher grades. This is due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and because the school was too easily satisfied with students achieving a grade C at GCSE, when they could have achieved more. Leaders and managers have recognised this and are taking steps to tackle it.
- The school's use of early entry in mathematics, in the past, contributed to low expectations. Although early entry benefitted some students this was not the case for all of them. A number of students of middle and higher ability were satisfied with lower grades when they could have achieved much better ones.
- Trends over time show that students' progress in English and mathematics is getting better as a result of improvements in the quality of teaching in both subjects.
- The progress of students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding and those students who need extra help is good and improving. Consequently, the achievement of these students, as measured by their average point scores, is in line with that of their peers in the school.
- The school regularly checks how well students are doing in each of their subjects. However, the information collected relates to students' test and examination results and leaders and managers do not analyse this information thoroughly enough to work out how well students are progressing. Consequently some underperforming middle and more able students are not identified quickly enough to help them get back on track.
- All students who attended Oldham College or other off-site providers in 2012 were successful. This was because the courses they took were well matched to their learning needs.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching in a minority of lessons is not good enough to ensure that students make the progress they are capable of. In those lessons that need improving teachers often do not have high enough expectations of what their students can do. The work is not challenging enough, particularly for middle ability and higher ability students. Consequently their pace of learning slows and they lose interest. This lack of interest occasionally results in low level disruptive behaviour.
- In some lessons teachers talk too much, which results in students having to sit and listen for long periods. This limits the time available for students to work on their own or in small groups to find things out for themselves.
- Students make the most rapid progress when expectations of them are high and they are clear about what they are doing. They enjoy lessons where they can take responsibility for their learning. For example in one outstanding English lesson students enjoyed the freedom to explore the different ways we use language in face to face conversations. As a result they deepened their understanding of why we adjust the way we speak; depending upon where we are and who we are talking to.
- The best lessons are well planned and teachers use the information they have about their students to prepare activities to meet their needs. Teachers use skilful questioning to encourage students to think and come up with answers to demonstrate their understanding. No time is wasted in these lessons; students show good attitudes to learning and make good progress.
- Students' skills in reading and writing are developed across the curriculum. All subjects focus on making sure students are introduced to key words. These are displayed in classrooms and act as

prompts to help students with their spelling.

- Marking of students' work is variable. The best marking gives credit for what the student has done well and also makes clear how the work can be improved. However, there are examples of marking that is unhelpful and there are other examples where work has not been marked for some time.
- Students who need extra help with their learning are well supported in lessons. Skilled teaching assistants work alongside these students giving them the confidence to tackle all the activities they are given to do. As a result students receiving this support make consistently good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' behaviour in lessons is not consistently good. In lessons where teachers' expectations are not high enough, or where the work is either too easy or too hard, some students take the opportunity to misbehave and distract others, which slows the pace of learning for everyone. When tasks are engaging and stimulate their interest students are eager to learn and participate fully in the activities that they are given to do.
- Most students behave well around the school and are well mannered. This contributes to a generally positive and relaxed atmosphere.
- Students who met with inspectors said that they feel safe and well-supported. This opinion was shared by most of the parents who responded to the on-line Parent View questionnaire.
- Students have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe and know who to go to should they experience any problems or difficulties. A number of students spoke very highly of the school's 'Gold Area': a place where a number of students are given additional help with their learning. One student said, 'In the Gold Area I feel welcomed, warm and secure'.
- Through assemblies and daily 'family time', students are taught about the different forms that bullying can take including cyber, racist and other prejudice-based bullying. Students told inspectors that there are few incidents of bullying in school but when they do happen they are dealt with effectively. This view was supported by almost all staff who responded to the questionnaire.
- Some of the funding that the school receives from the pupil premium is used effectively to provide support for students who find it difficult to come to school every day, or who have trouble managing their behaviour. For example the 'Study Zone' is an area where students are taught in small groups and have opportunities to improve their reading, writing and maths skills. Students whose attendance is poor or whose behaviour gives cause for concern can attend the Gateway Centre where they do work to help them improve their reading, writing and mathematical skills. As a result of this support students' attendance has improved and the number of exclusions for unacceptable behaviour has fallen significantly compared to a similar period last year.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The headteacher and senior leadership group have not identified and dealt with the underperformance of some middle and higher ability students quickly enough. They acknowledge that their analysis of students' performance places too much emphasis on students' results and that the measurement and expectations of students' progress are not rigorous enough. They have correctly identified that the achievement of students at the school requires improvement.
- Leaders and managers regularly review the work of the school; however, the information they collect is not always used well enough to bring about improvement. This is because they do not fully assess the impact of the actions they are taking to improve the school or use this assessment to identify the most important targets for the development plan.
- The headteacher and his colleagues are committed to improving the school. He has made

effective use of the consultant provided by the local authority to develop a system for monitoring the quality of teaching. Teachers whose lessons are identified as less than good receive support to improve. Teachers who do not improve or who fail to meet their annual performance targets do not receive an increase in their pay.

- The curriculum is rich and varied and offers students a range of learning opportunities to meet their needs. The variety of after-school activities and trips contribute well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The Failsworth Learning Partnership of local organisations and schools provides good opportunities for students to work on community education projects; effectively promoting these students' social development.
- The school meets the statutory requirements for making sure that students are safe. The school's staff have received training in recognising signs of abuse or neglect and there are effective links with local children's services if extra support is needed.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body share the headteacher's vision and support him in his drive to improve the school. They are well informed about the school's strengths, its areas for development and the quality of teaching. They understand that attainment compares favourably to other schools but realise that measures of students' progress are not as good. Governors recognize that improving students' progress is a major priority for the school. The governors have carefully analysed how the school is spending the funding it receives from the pupil premium and are aware of the positive effect it is having on the achievement of those students it is aimed at. They contribute appropriately to performance management systems to hold staff to account. Governors have increased their expertise as a result of training organised by the local authority and school.

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	105735
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	412787

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1480
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Hanaghan
Headteacher	John Meagher
Date of previous school inspection	23 June 2010
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