

Lymm High School

Oughtrington Lane, Lymm, Cheshire, WA13 0RB

Inspection dates 3–4 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- The quality of teaching is good overall and much is outstanding, leading to students making good and outstanding progress in the majority of lessons.
- Students' attainment is consistently well above the national average.
- Achievement in mathematics is consistently outstanding.
- The sixth form is good. The diverse curriculum and high-quality enrichment experiences in the sixth form results in students' good success rates.
- Students with specific needs are supported extremely well.
- Students behave well in lessons and around the school. They have a positive attitude to learning and make the most of their experiences in the classroom and in the wide range of extra-curricular activities. This contributes well to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Attendance is above the national average and improving whilst exclusions are in line with or below the national average, and declining.
- The recently appointed Executive Principal's vision for success and his determination to drive the academy forward is having a positive impact in all areas.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although much of the teaching is good or better, a significant minority requires improvement because the activities in lessons do not match the students' needs and abilities sufficiently well.
- The marking of books is inconsistent. Not all teachers give students enough information about how they can improve their work.
- The gap in achievement between pupils eligible for the pupil premium and their peers in English is not closing rapidly enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 46 teachers in 48 part-lessons including three joint observations with members of the academy's senior team. Inspectors also held meetings with approximately 50 students from all year groups.
- Meetings were held with the executive principal, the Chair of the Governing Body, a local authority representative, senior and middle leaders, teachers and other academy staff. Informal discussions also took place with staff and students.
- Inspectors took account of the 343 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the 97 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including minutes of the Governing Body, the academy's self-evaluation, safeguarding and child-protection records, and data relating to students' achievement.

Inspection team

Janet Palmer, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Selby

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lenford White

Additional Inspector

Neil MacKenzie

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Full report

Information about this school

- Lymm High School converted to become an academy from September 2012. When its predecessor school, Lymm High Voluntary Controlled School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The academy is considerably larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students that the academy has identified as disabled or having special educational needs, therefore requiring extra support through 'school action' or 'school action plus' is lower than the national average, as is the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average.¹
- Most students are of White British heritage.
- Fourteen students attend full- or part-time off-site provision. Five are at the New Horizons Pupil Referral Unit; three at the New Horizons Vulnerable Pupil Unit; three at the vocational learning provider Warrington Collegiate, and three at the Fullager Construction Skills Centre.
- The principal of the academy is currently suspended from duties. An executive principal was appointed in September 2013.
- Staff turnover has been very high in recent months with 48 new teaching staff appointed to the academy in September 2013.
- The academy works closely with the Dean Trust which is a multi-academy trust and, although Lymm High School is a separate entity, it is part of the Dean Trust Teaching School Alliance.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good and outstanding by ensuring:
 - all lessons provide appropriate challenge for students across the ability range
 - marking and feedback to students is consistently good or better.
- Close the gap between the achievement of students eligible for the pupil premium and their peers in English.

¹ The pupil premium is specific, additional funding provided to support the education of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years, children who have been looked after continuously for a period of six months and children whose parents are currently serving in the armed forces.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join Lymm High School with attainment that is well above the national average and they have consistently attained standards well above those of students nationally in gaining at least five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics. The use of early entry for some GCSEs has not limited the potential of the most-able students who go on to achieve well.
- Although the academic year 2012 to 2013 saw a downturn in measures of attainment at the academy, and levels of progress well below expectations, students are currently meeting and exceeding expectations, indicating good achievement overall. Evidence from the progress students are making in lessons and the quality of the work in their books shows that they are on track to continue to achieve well.
- Over the last three years students have consistently achieved outstandingly well in mathematics.
- The percentage of students attaining the higher levels at Key Stage 3 have increased year on year for all groups, including pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs.
- A more personalised curriculum and effective support systems for disabled students and those with special educational needs is ensuring that they make progress that is in line with that of their peers. One parent described the positive impact on her son of recent mentor support and the academy's determination to find him the right curriculum pathway. She wrote that 'the praise and extra support has been greatly beneficial ... and for the willingness and caring attitude that has been shown ... we are very grateful to the school and teachers'.
- Students who receive all or part of their learning off site are monitored closely and are achieving well.
- Since 2011 the gap between pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and their peers in gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE has decreased by 15 percentage points, to currently stand at minus 12 per cent. In mathematics the gap had decreased by 17 percentage points to currently stand at minus 13 per cent. However, the gap in English has widened by 7 percentage points and currently stands at minus 27 per cent.
- The funding for students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium² is having a positive impact on their progress in English and mathematics. The students' personal and academic development is closely monitored by support staff to ensure that the strategies that are in place are meeting their needs.
- Literacy has a high profile in the academy; teachers encourage the use of subject-specific vocabulary in lessons; posters of their teachers reading their favourite books inspire students to read widely and often; the library is well-stocked; all form rooms have book boxes; and students read for at least one form period per week.
- The achievement of students in the sixth form has been consistently good over time. The progress students make at GCE A-level is in line with the national rates but very much stronger at GCE AS-level where progress is significantly better than national rates. The best performing subject over time has been English literature and the weakest are art and law.

The quality of teaching is good

- A large majority of the teaching is good or better. Students have good relationships with their teachers and with each other. This usually leads to students actively supporting each other's learning and striving to meet their teachers' high expectations.
- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and organise interesting and well-paced activities to capture students' imagination. They select and use a range of resources well and

² The Year 7 catch-up premium is for students who did not achieve the expected level 4 in English at the end of Key Stage 2.

engage students in assessing their own progress.

- The most effective teachers use questioning to judge levels of understanding and challenge students to think more deeply and respond more thoughtfully. They have a detailed understanding of each student's learning needs and monitor their progress regularly to ensure these needs are being met.
- Students have lots of opportunities to work in pairs, in groups and independently, helping them to develop a good range of communication and study skills.
- The minority of lessons that require improvement or are inadequate are characterised by work that is insufficiently challenging for some students and too difficult for others. In these lessons the assessment of students' understanding is sometimes tokenistic and the teacher fails to adapt the work to ensure all students make progress.
- In the lessons that fail to engage and stretch the students, they sometimes resort to low levels of disruptive behaviour causing the teacher to have to repeat their instructions and thus slow down the pace of learning.
- Much of the marking in books is of a high standard but this is not consistently the case. Some books contain only students' peer and self-assessment with little evidence that its accuracy has been checked by the teacher or that the student understands what they need to do to improve their work.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form has been variable in the past because too many teachers missed too many lessons. This problem has now been resolved and teaching in the sixth form is now good. One student commented, 'this is like a different school from last year'. Attitudes to learning in the sixth form are very positive, attendance in Year 13 has improved and is now good, and retention rates are above average. Students are well-prepared for their progression to higher level study but they say they would value more regular feedback on their progress during modules of work rather than at the end of the module.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students arrive at lessons ready to learn. They fully engage with the tasks, ask as well as answer questions and work extremely well together.
- Attendance is above the national average and improving whilst exclusions are in line with or below the national average, and declining.
- Students are friendly, welcoming and courteous. They behave well during breaks and in the lunch-hour even though some areas of the academy can become crowded at these times.
- The students who met with inspectors said that there were 'hardly any bullies' and that when bullying is reported to an adult it is likely to stop. They said that racist language, attitudes or behaviour are not tolerated by staff or students and that the great majority of teachers would take action against any form of homophobia or transphobia, as would most of the students.
- Last year only a small minority of parents who completed the Parent View questionnaire agreed that behaviour in the academy was good. At the time of the inspection, this had changed to a large majority agreeing that behaviour was good, and 92% agreeing that their child felt safe at the academy.
- Students in the sixth form act as role models to younger students. They enjoy taking responsibility by engaging in activities such as running subject clubs, mentoring younger students and charity fund-raising.
- Systems and procedures for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements.

The leadership and management are good

- The visionary leadership of the recently appointed executive principal is bringing about rapid and secure improvements. He demonstrates a determination to challenge any areas of underperformance or complacency and is empowering the academy's very able middle leaders,

many of whom are new in post, to challenge their own departments similarly.

- A comment on the staff questionnaire that, 'the school has changed dramatically over the past few months and for the better', is typical of those made by staff to inspectors. Another remarked, 'I feel this is a really exciting time for Lymm'. Parents are similarly more positive about the academy with a large majority stating that they would recommend the academy to another parent.
- Effective systems to manage and reward teachers' performance are in place. Regular observations by senior leaders of lessons identify the strengths in teaching and the actions for improvement, which are then followed up and supported.
- Plans to raise achievement are clearly focused on the quality of teaching and the monitoring of students' progress. Outstanding practice such as that seen in the mathematics department is being shared across the academy and advantage is being taken of the academy's links with departments in other schools to learn from best practice.
- Effective procedures are in place to ensure that students in the academy and at off-site provision are properly safeguarded. Off-site provision is closely monitored and keeping safe is addressed through the curriculum where students learn, among other things, about sexual health, drug and alcohol misuse and how to stay safe when using social networking sites.
- Leaders and managers have concluded that one underlying cause of the dip in the performance in 2013 was the inappropriateness of the curriculum for some groups of students. The curriculum has since been revised to match the courses to students' interests and abilities better and current progress data indicate that this is having a positive impact.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced by the very many opportunities the academy provides for them to engage in charitable, artistic, sporting and other activities.
- Equalities are addressed in the formal and wider curriculum and prejudiced-based bullying and derogatory language are tackled well. However, the academy has yet to ensure that all policies are up to date, are ratified by the Governing Body and fully meet the requirements of the 2010 equalities legislation with regard to protected groups.
- The sixth form is led very well. The head of the sixth form who was recently appointed has already demonstrated considerable impact on improvements to teaching, learning and attendance. Students are very positive about their experiences in the sixth form and feel both supported and challenged.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Through their involvement in recent appointments, the governing body has played an important part in strengthening considerably the academy's leadership and capacity to improve. They have developed their knowledge of the work of the academy and are confident in their ability both to support and challenge its work. Governors have a good understanding of the academy's finances, including the appropriate allocation of pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding. They understand and fulfil their responsibilities with regard to keeping students safe and now have a sound knowledge about the quality of teaching.

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	138732
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	427652

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1,877
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	400
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kieran Walshe
Headteacher	Tarun Kapur CBE
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2008
Telephone number	01925755458
Fax number	01925758439
Email address	info@lymmhigh.org.uk

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