

# Castlebrook High School

Parr Lane, Bury, Lancashire, BL9 8LP

**Inspection dates** 18–19 June 2014

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

- While students make broadly expected progress in their learning overall, too few make good progress. This is because expectations of what they can and should achieve are not high enough.
- There has been too much emphasis on students attaining a C grade in their GCSE examinations rather than all students and groups making good progress from their different starting points.
- This means, for example, that the most able students are not reaching high enough standards. Gaps in attainment and progress between students eligible for pupil premium funding and other students in the school are not closing consistently.
- Students' learning is slowed by the fact that work is not always challenging enough for them. Students with different levels of knowledge and understanding often do identical work and so the more able students or those who find the work hard do not make enough progress.
- Students do not receive consistently detailed guidance on how to improve their work, and they are not always expected to respond to any comments made when their work is marked.
- The school has not improved enough over the past three years. This is because the headteacher and senior leaders have been slow to accurately identify areas that require improvement and to take effective action to tackle them, including teaching and students' achievement.
- Senior leaders have not provided a clear enough lead for the work of other staff. As a result leaders at other levels, although working hard, are not sufficiently effective at improving the areas they are responsible for.
- Governors do not always receive the quality of information they need to fully answer the questions they ask of the school.

### The school has the following strengths

- The large majority of students are pleasant, polite, keen to learn and do as they are asked. They behave well and feel safe in school.
- Some work given to students is well planned and results in good progress being made.
- There have been some improvements, such as rising attendance and falling exclusions.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 29 parts of lessons during the inspection and they made further visits to classrooms to look at students' work.
- Inspectors had meetings with groups of students and school leaders. They also meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and the school effectiveness partner.
- Inspectors took account of the views of the 41 parents who had completed the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), and the additional information from the parents who made their views known to the team. Forty-nine questionnaires returned by staff were also considered.
- A wide range of documents were scrutinised, including information relating to students' progress and attendance, safeguarding, the monitoring of teaching, performance management and governance.

## Inspection team

Joan McKenna, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christine Addison

Additional Inspector

Bernard Robinson

Additional Inspector

Janet Pruchniewicz

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs who are supported at school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is well-below average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is broadly average. Pupil premium funding supports those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of a local authority.
- The school makes use of the local authority's Emotional Pupil Referral Unit to provide education for a very small number of students.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets out the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher is a Local Leader of Education.

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

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching so that it promotes good or better achievement for all groups of learners across all subjects and for all ages by ensuring that:
  - all leaders and teachers have high enough expectations of what students can and should achieve
  - teachers take into account where different students are at in their learning when planning work for them so it is appropriately challenging and promotes equally good progress for all abilities
  - teachers and other staff take specific actions to ensure that any differences in attainment and progress between different groups of students reduce, including those who are eligible for pupil premium funding
  - ensure that all students receive clear feedback on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work, and ensure that students respond to the guidance given.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders at all levels so that they improve the school at a more rapid rate by:
  - ensuring that leaders' monitoring of the school's effectiveness is thorough and results in accurate judgements being made, making sure there is enough emphasis given to students' progress, any differences between groups and how other outcomes are improving
  - ensuring that the headteacher and senior leaders provide a clear and effective lead to guide the work of other staff
  - develop the knowledge, understanding and skills of leaders at all levels, including middle leaders, so that all play an effective part in improving the areas they are responsible for
  - providing accurate information to the governing body so that they can carry out their role effectively.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- The attainment on entry to the school of the students who left Year 11 in 2013 was broadly in line with the national average. The proportion that gained five or more GCSEs with good grades, including in English and mathematics, was broadly average. Results in most other subjects were average too. This represents expected progress overall. Too few students made more than expected progress.
- Not enough of the most able students gained high grades. The school's concentration on acquiring C grades at GCSE means that expectations of the most able students have been too low and they have not been stretched or encouraged strongly enough to reach the standards they are capable of.
- Students who are eligible for the pupil premium funding do not achieve as well as other students. There was a big difference in the proportions gaining five or more GCSEs with good grades, including in English and mathematics, in comparison with other students in the school, and, overall, they were over three-quarters of a GCSE grade behind in both subjects. While some gaps in their achievement are narrowing, this is not consistent. Some gaps are getting wider. This shows that the use of pupil premium funding is not being fully effective, although it is making a difference in some cases.
- The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is variable. Some make good progress but not all do so.
- Students' attainment and rates of progress seen in their work in books and in assessments made about their achievement, and hence in their learning over time, are also variable. While some show good progress being made, more is no better than expected.
- The use of funding to support students who enter the school with low levels of literacy and numeracy is having some impact on accelerating their progress, although not for all of them. Opportunities to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects are missed.
- The school has stopped entering students for English and mathematics examinations early as it was seen to be detrimental to their success.
- The school has arranged for a very small number of students to receive their education from a different provider. This alternative provision is meeting their needs better and so their progress is accelerating.
- The school is predicting some better examination outcomes in 2014, and there is evidence of some improvements having been made. A dip in mathematics outcomes in 2012 was reversed in 2013 and a dip in English in 2013 is in line to be reversed in the 2014. Other improvements in students' progress are evident across the school. The variability that still exists, however, shows that despite the work taking place to enable students to achieve well, the school is not ensuring that all do so equally.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching is not ensuring that students learn consistently well.
- A key factor limiting students' learning is that insufficient account is taken of their different starting points and hence constitutes good progress for students of different abilities. It is common for all students in a class to be given identical work even though they are working at different levels and have different targets. While the tasks given promote some gains in knowledge and understanding, they do not always stretch the most able students who are capable of harder work. For example, some worksheets used in science and mathematics have basic questions that test students' knowledge, but they do not contain the type of questions that develops a deeper understanding of the topic being studied. This restricts their progress over time.
- Sometimes, even when a task is suitable, opportunities are missed to challenge students sufficiently, such as when students are asked to make a prediction about what will happen

during an experiment, but not why.

- Strategies used to check students' understanding are limited in range and are not always effective. For example, too often, one student giving a correct answer is taken to mean that all understand, when it is clear from individuals' work that not all do so. This particularly affects those who are finding the work difficult.
- Information about how individual students are progressing and whether any are from groups who are doing less well than others in the school is rarely used in lessons to take extra steps to help accelerate their progress so they catch up. This is one of the reasons why gaps between students eligible for pupil premium funding and others are not closing consistently quickly.
- Some teaching is promoting good learning over time. Examples were seen where teachers' knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, their subjects was strong. Interesting tasks that captivated students were planned and thought had been given about what modifications were needed to ensure that all could make good progress. Students could see that these teachers really wanted every one of them to learn well and had gone the extra mile for them. They responded in kind, working very hard and with high levels of enjoyment. Where discussions with students and their work in books showed that this was the norm, good progress was clearly evident.
- The marking of students' work is very variable in quality. Some is regular, detailed, with helpfully specific guidance on what students need to do to improve their work and move towards their target grades. Other marking is cursory, for example with just ticks or crosses, and, in relation to the latter, no reasons given as to why, so students are left not knowing where they have gone wrong and therefore cannot correct it. This quality of marking over time for those who receive it is another factor that restricts students' progress.

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

- Students show positive attitudes to learning and attend lessons ready to work. Most do exactly as they are asked to do by their teachers. When care has been taken to make lessons and tasks interesting and challenging, students respond with high levels of engagement and application. Even when teachers do not plan as well, most students nevertheless still follow instructions and try hard. On these occasions, however, their learning is less effective in individual lessons and over time.
- When they are given opportunities to develop the skills that help them be successful learners, such as initiative, the ability to solve problems and working with others, they demonstrate a good capacity to acquire and demonstrate them. They have too few opportunities to do so as a matter of routine.
- The behaviour of students is good. The large majority of students show respect for each other, for adults and the school. They are sensible, mature and extremely responsible young people. Behaviour is occasionally less than good, especially when teaching is less effective.
- Relationships are very positive. Students are aware of different kinds of bullying and say little occurs. This is backed up by school records.
- From a historically high level of exclusions, there has been significant reduction over time, helped by better systems for providing appropriate support and care for students.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say they feel safe in school and the views of parents are in accord with this. Procedures for helping students understand about danger and how to keep themselves safe are strong. Information is given and reinforced well through the pastoral curriculum and assemblies.
- Attendance has risen over the past few years and is now in line with the national average. Persistent absence has reduced markedly due to better intervention.
- While leaders now undertake analysis of data relating to relevant aspects of behaviour as well as attendance, aspects of this are very recent. Understanding the impact of actions taken at an appropriate level of detail, therefore, is not well developed. The data shows that students from groups who are at risk of falling behind in their learning, such as those eligible for pupil premium funding and those who have special educational needs, are disproportionately represented in the

referrals for behaviour and absence.

## **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because there has not been a focused or urgent enough approach taken to ensuring that all students achieve well. Some helpful actions have been, and continue to be, taken, but they have not been part of a coherent, well-planned strategy that everyone understands. Therefore, the work of the headteacher and senior leaders have not been effective in driving improvement at a fast enough pace.
- Leaders at all levels are involved in monitoring the effectiveness of their work or the school more generally. Too much emphasis has been given to actions taken as opposed to their impact on improving students' progress or other outcomes over time, however, or to any differences between groups. Some overgenerous judgements have therefore been made. This has been exacerbated by a lack of understanding of what constitutes good progress, which has lowered expectations of students and has made the extent to which teachers are held to account for securing it less rigorous.
- Aspects of practice lack some rigour and clarity. For example, there is confusion about roles of different personnel involved in tracking and analysing students' progress. Different systems for tracking progress operate in different parts of the school making it hard for there to be a clear overview of progress across the school. The school is in the process of moving to a new, school-wide system to rectify this.
- The quality of middle leadership is mixed. While there are areas of stronger practice, in general, the knowledge, understanding and skills of middle leaders are not well developed and this is limiting their effectiveness. Helpful professional development has recently been provided to help tackle this.
- Although these weaknesses mean that school improvement is not fast enough, there is sufficient competent practice to be ensuring that students develop well personally and make adequate, although not good, academic progress.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and it provides appropriate routes through to the next stage of education and training for students. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through a wide range of activities within and beyond school.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.
- The local authority reports having limited capacity to work with the school directly, but has brokered the services of an external school effectiveness partner to provide challenge and support. Judgements made, however, have been based on a restricted range of information about the school and this has reduced the effectiveness of the challenge provided.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are ambitious for students and know that the school needs to improve further. They understand their responsibilities, have an adequate knowledge of key aspects of the school's work, including, for example, about teaching, the management of staff's performance and how pupil premium funding is spent, and have identified specific and appropriate areas where they want to sharpen up their understanding. They ask pertinent questions of leaders in order to gain the information they need to carry out their role. The answers they sometimes receive are not of the quality they should be.

## 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>	105363
<b>Local authority</b>	Bury
<b>Inspection number</b>	444359

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	820
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rob Dawson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Anthony Roberts
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 March 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 796 9820
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