

# Sir Thomas Boteler Church of England High School

Grammar School Road, Latchford, Warrington, WA4 1JL

**Inspection dates** 10–11 September 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires special measures.

- Achievement is inadequate for all groups of students. They start school in Year 7 with attainment that is typically broadly average. Progress is inadequate in Key Stages 3 and 4. In 2014, the proportion of Year 11 students attaining five good GCSEs including in English and mathematics declined significantly and was too low.
- Disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium funding make inadequate progress. The gap between their achievement and that of those who are not supported by the funding nationally is too wide.
- The impact of teaching on students' learning over time is inadequate. Teachers do not have an accurate view of how well students are learning; consequently they are unable to set work which matches students' abilities.
- Teachers do not explain clearly enough what they want students to learn and so students do not know what is expected of them.
- Students do not always enjoy their learning and are often slow to settle to their work. As a result, their behaviour and attitudes to learning require improvement.
- Leaders and governors have had, until recently, an overgenerous view of how well the school is performing. As a result, they have not tackled weaknesses robustly or quickly enough over time. Since the last inspection, they have been ineffective in bringing about improvements in teaching and achievement. Consequently, students' achievement has declined.
- Leaders have failed to focus their actions on the most urgent priorities. Students' poor literacy skills are a significant barrier to their overall achievement. The lack of clear accountability and leadership has resulted in there being no clear strategy to tackle underachievement.
- Despite some improvement since the last inspection, attendance remains below average.

### The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has quickly established a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and shows a determination to improve. She has already begun to make changes to the senior and middle leadership in order to drive improvement more quickly.
- Students feel safe in school and treat each other with courtesy and respect.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 33 lessons taught by 30 different teachers. Three of these lessons were observed jointly with two members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors observed students’ behaviour around the school as well as in lessons. They talked with students informally about their learning, as well as holding more formal meetings with groups of students of different abilities and from both key stages.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, members of the teaching staff and the governing body. In addition, inspectors met with two representatives from the local authority.
- The views of 23 parents who responded to the on-line parental questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account, as well as information collected by the school about the views of parents. In addition, inspectors scrutinised responses to a staff questionnaire.
- The inspection team examined a range of documentation, including data about students’ achievement from internal tracking systems and analysis provided by school leaders. Inspectors also scrutinised leaders’ monitoring records, including minutes of governing body meetings and information provided relating to attendance, safeguarding and behaviour.

## Inspection team

Christine Birchall, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Osama Abdul Rahim	Additional Inspector
Bimla Kumari	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Haddock	Additional Inspector
Stephen Helm	Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.*

### Information about this school

- Sir Thomas Boteler Church of England High School is a smaller than average-sized secondary school. The vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium funding is slightly above average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students who are supported at school action is above average. The proportions supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs are also higher than the national average.
- The school makes alternative provision for a very small number of students at New Horizons.
- There is a resourced provision for students with cognitive and learning disabilities. There are currently 13 students on roll.
- A new headteacher took up post in September 2014.
- The school receives support from a National Leader in Education and subject Specialist Leaders in Education through partnership with the Great Sankey Teaching School Alliance.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Take urgent steps to improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good in all subjects, particularly in English and mathematics, in order that the progress of all groups of students accelerates rapidly and they achieve well by:
  - ensuring that teachers' assessments of how well students are learning are accurate, and that they use this information to set work which enables all abilities of students to make at least good progress
  - raising teachers' expectations of what students can achieve, so that they provide more appropriate levels of challenge and ask probing questions to check students' understanding and to stimulate their interest
  - ensuring that all marking and feedback to students gives them very clear guidance about what they need to do to improve their work, particularly in their literacy development, and that students respond to the advice
  - ensuring that all teachers have good subject knowledge and that they use this effectively to explain to students what they should be learning in lessons and what they must do to be successful
  - ensuring that, in English, students have sufficient guidance to help them to structure their writing and develop their communication and extended writing skills across the curriculum
  - ensuring that students have plenty of opportunities in mathematics to solve problems so that they can develop and apply their understanding of key mathematical concepts
  - providing activities which are interesting, exciting and challenging enough so that students are encouraged to settle quickly to tasks, are keen and motivated to work hard and to do their best.
- Improve students' attendance in order that it is at least in line with the national average by using data about the attendance of particular groups of students to analyse patterns in their absence and target support more effectively.

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels, including governance, in bringing about improvements, by:
  - ensuring that middle leaders have a clear understanding of their accountability for their areas of responsibility and that they have sufficient training to enable them to be successful
  - ensuring that senior and middle leaders check that data about how well students are learning are accurate and that they use them to hold teachers to account for the progress of students in their classes
  - ensuring that action plans have clear ways of measuring their success and that monitoring activities to check on the impact of actions aimed at improving teaching and achievement are robust
  - ensuring that performance management targets for teachers are challenging and that individuals are provided with appropriate support to help them to improve their practice
  - ensuring that governors hold the school to account effectively for its performance, including the impact of the pupil premium
  - taking steps to share and embed the good teaching practice which already exists within the school.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leaders have failed to bring about adequate improvement since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has deteriorated and is now inadequate, because the necessary improvements have not been tackled effectively. This has resulted in a significant decline in students' achievement, as shown in the 2014 GCSE results and in the slow progress of students currently across Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Leaders have persisted with an overgenerous view of how well the school is performing and consequently have not been sufficiently challenging where weaknesses exist. Leaders' plans to bring about improvement have lacked the necessary detail and have not been well prioritised to impact on improvement where it is needed most. Activities to check on how well actions are working have not been robust and leaders have, therefore, been unable to identify when improvements have been too slow.
- Leaders now understand that teaching is inadequate, because they know that achievement is inadequate. However, they are still not clear enough about precisely which aspects of teaching need to be improved. As a result, the targets which have been set for teachers to help them to improve their performance have not been precise or challenging enough, and training has not been targeted well enough to the needs of individual teachers to provide them with the right support.
- Leaders have not checked that teachers have the skills to assess accurately how well students are learning. As a result, whole-school systems for checking on students' progress are ineffective because they are based on inaccurate data. This means that leaders and teachers are unable to target additional support for students where it is needed, and that they have had an over-optimistic view of how well students will achieve.
- The headteacher has reorganised the senior leadership team and allocated different roles and responsibilities. Until recently, senior and middle leaders, including subject leaders, have not been effectively held to account for bringing about improvements in their areas. They do not use the full range of information available to check how well students are doing in their subjects, or to check on the quality of teaching and the curriculum. Some subject leaders still believe that teaching in their area is good, despite the fact that students make inadequate progress.
- The curriculum does not enable students to make adequate progress. In particular, there is no clear strategy for promoting literacy or numeracy across the school, despite students' literacy and numeracy skills being poor and affecting their performance at GCSE. Even though there is a whole-school focus on marking and feedback teachers still do not ensure that students know what to do to improve their work and this is particularly true of students' spelling, grammar and communication skills. The school does provide students with appropriate information and guidance to help them make their course choices at GCSE level and in their next steps after Year 11.
- Leaders have not developed sufficiently robust strategies for checking on the impact of key additional funding the school receives. For example, they are unable to measure the impact of additional funding to help Year 7 pupils who start school with below average attainment in English and mathematics to catch up. Senior leaders are unclear about the impact of pupil premium funding. As a result, achievement has not improved, and gaps between the attainment of those pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding and those who are not have widened. This shows that the school's efforts to promote equality of opportunity are ineffective.
- The new headteacher is under no illusions about the weaknesses in the school. She has made a number of new appointments at leadership level to help to bring about improvements and has been welcoming of external support. Plans are in place to raise expectations of what students can achieve by setting them more challenging targets. Students report that they have been increasingly challenged, for example about behaviour, since she took up post. However, it is too early to see evidence of any impact, and there is still insufficient evidence of strength, particularly in middle leadership, to help her to bring about rapid improvement.
- The school makes good provision for students' social, moral and spiritual development. Students have plenty of opportunities to reflect on moral issues. Provision for cultural development, although secure, is less well developed as teachers sometimes miss opportunities in discussion to probe students' understanding of life in modern Britain and British values.
- The local authority knows the school well, and has categorised it as causing concern, which means that it receives considerable additional financial support, as well as challenge to leaders, in order to bring about improvements. A National Leader in Education and subject Specialist Leaders in Education are also working alongside school leaders.
- Leaders should not appoint newly qualified teachers to the school.

### ■ **The governance of the school:**

- Since the previous inspection the governing body has undertaken a review of governance and now has a clearer understanding of its role in supporting and challenging school leaders. They have undertaken an audit of their skills, and have restructured committees to ensure that each has governors with the skills to carry out their functions effectively. Discussion with a selection of governors indicated that they now have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, and a determination to secure improvement and promote the best opportunities for their students. Recent minutes of their meetings show greater evidence of challenge to school leaders. They have a clear action plan in place for the coming year to monitor the impact of the school's actions, including checking on the impact of pupil premium spending and performance management for teachers. However, as with other aspects of leadership, it is much too early to see evidence of any impact on bringing about improvement.
- Governors ensure that all statutory safeguarding requirements are met.

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

### **requires improvement**

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement. This is because, despite recent improvements in attendance and a reduction in the number of students who are persistently absent, overall attendance remains below average, particularly for disadvantaged students. Leaders do not analyse data about attendance sufficiently rigorously to target support where it is most needed.
- Students report that they feel safe in school, and that incidents of bullying are rare and dealt with effectively by adults. Students have a secure understanding of how to keep themselves safe, because the school ensures that they are able to do so through, for example, providing them with information about e-safety. Students have a good understanding of the different forms which bullying may take, including prejudice-based bullying.
- The behaviour of students requires improvement because their attitudes to learning are not consistently good enough to ensure that they make good progress. Students lose interest and are slow to settle to the work set when the teaching is not sufficiently engaging. They do not always work as hard as they should, or complete work to the best of their ability. Students do not always take pride in their work or present it well.
- Students behave well and move around the school in a calm and safe manner, including in the dining hall and at break time, and treat each other with courtesy and respect. They hold doors open for each other and for visitors. Students who are new to the school say that they feel well supported by their peers to settle in.
- Students dress smartly and take pride in their appearance. They treat the school environment with respect and there is little evidence of litter.
- Teachers and students have good relationships and students are appreciative of the support which teachers give them. Teachers do not make good enough use of the positive relationships to challenge students to achieve much better than they do.

### **The quality of teaching**

### **is inadequate**

- As a result of weak teaching over time, all groups of students make inadequate progress. Teachers do not have the skills to make accurate judgements about how well students are achieving; consequently they are unable to provide challenge and support where it is most needed.
- Weak subject knowledge on the part of too many teachers means that they are unable to explain well enough to students what they are to learn. Instructions and explanations are not always clear enough. This means that students are not always able to settle to their work quickly. Students do not understand what to do or how to be successful.
- Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are frequently too low, and insufficient challenge is often provided, particularly for the most able. Questions students are asked are not probing enough to check what they really understand or to encourage them to explain and deepen their thinking. Opportunities are frequently missed to make learning engaging by relating it to students' experiences and interests, or to issues which are of current topical concern.
- A lack of understanding of how well students are learning means that activities are not tailored to their different abilities. Too often, students are expected to complete the same tasks at the same pace, with no difference in the amount of support they receive to enable them to do so. As a result, the most able are

insufficiently challenged, while the least able struggle to make sense of the tasks.

- Although there are examples of good marking and feedback, particularly in religious studies, too often insufficient guidance is offered to students to help them to make progress at a good enough rate. As a result, students are unable to use teachers' feedback to improve their work and to make good progress.
- The teaching of literacy is inadequate. Students are not provided with enough encouragement or opportunities to read, or to develop their literacy and communication skills. Students do not have enough opportunities to write at length, nor are they challenged to express their ideas clearly. Consequently, students do not develop the writing skills needed to reach the highest levels of attainment at GCSE level in all subjects.

### **The achievement of pupils**

is inadequate

- In 2014, unvalidated results show that only 26% of students in Year 11 attained five good GCSEs, including in English and mathematics, essential for success in future work and education. This is well below the 2013 national average. The proportions of students who made expected progress or better than expected progress from their individual starting points were also well below average. This is a significant decline on the school's results in previous years and was well below those predicted by senior leaders. Attainment was also below the 2013 national average in most subjects, including humanities, languages, science, technology and citizenship, as well as English and mathematics.
- The most-able students make inadequate progress. The proportions that attain the highest grades at GCSE have remained persistently below average. This is because these students do not have the skills to explain their thinking clearly in discussion, and struggle to communicate and support their ideas through extended writing.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs, including those in the resourced provision, make inadequate progress. Although teachers know these students as individuals, they do not use data well enough to check the progress of groups of students with special educational needs as a whole, and so are unable to provide them with the additional support and guidance that they need. As a result, some students struggle to complete their work because it is too hard, while for others work is too easy and expectations of what they can achieve are too low.
- Achievement in English is inadequate. Students' literacy skills are weak, and students are not given enough opportunities to develop, use and apply their skills. Students are unable to sustain and develop their ideas through extended writing, and marking does not always correct errors in grammar and punctuation. Writing tasks do not provide them with enough opportunity to write for a range of purposes. Year 7 catch-up funding is not monitored well enough to accelerate the progress of targeted students. In reading, students do not receive enough encouragement to read, and, as a result, lack confidence and are reluctant readers.
- Achievement in mathematics is inadequate. Students are able to follow processes and apply techniques, but they do not have a secure understanding of the concepts, which underpin them. They are not provided with sufficient opportunities to apply their developing mathematical skills.
- In 2013, disadvantaged students attained half a grade lower in English than non-disadvantaged students nationally, and just over a grade lower in mathematics. They attained a third of a grade lower than non-disadvantaged students in the school in English and half a grade lower in mathematics. In 2013, the proportion of disadvantaged students who attained five good GCSEs, including in English and mathematics was eight percentage points lower than non-disadvantaged students in the school. In 2014, unvalidated results show that this gap widened so that there was a 27 percentage point difference. Because of inaccessible data, leaders are unable to provide convincing evidence that these gaps will close for students currently in the school. Attendance for disadvantaged students is also lower than for other students in school, and this has a negative impact on their achievement.
- Students who have access to alternative placements make better progress than their peers, because the school ensures that they have access to an appropriate curriculum and qualifications. They do not yet achieve well because leaders are not yet rigorous enough in tracking their progress and using the information to support their learning.

## 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>	133672
<b>Local authority</b>	Warrington
<b>Inspection number</b>	432138

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 aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11-16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	752
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Stuart Titchard
<b>Headteacher</b>	Beverley Scott-Herron
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	31 October 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01925 636414
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