

# Failsworth School

Brierley Avenue, Failsworth, Manchester, M35 9HA

**Inspection dates** 21–22 October 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.

- Since the last inspection leaders and managers have not had enough impact on improving students' achievement. Consequently the school's overall effectiveness has declined.
- Too few students, including boys, the most able and the disadvantaged, make at least the progress expected of them, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Standards in GCSE examinations are below average and are not rising quickly enough. The improvements predicted for the school next year are not borne out by the quality of students' learning in lessons and books.
- Literacy is not taught effectively in a range of subjects. Consequently students have weaknesses in their grammatical, punctuation and spelling skills. Presentation of students' work, including handwriting and the general layout are too often poor.
- The quality of teaching over time is inadequate. It is not promoting rapid improvement to students' achievement. Teachers' questioning and marking are too variable in quality.
- The work set by teachers is often too hard for some students and too easy for others. Students' targets are not always challenging enough to enable them to achieve as well as they should consistently over time.
- Students do not have positive attitudes to learning when teaching does not involve or interest them.
- Expectations of behaviour are not always high enough and the behaviour policy is not implemented promptly and consistently by all staff.
- Leaders and managers do not always identify exactly what the weaknesses are in teaching and make sure that these are addressed effectively, consequently they do not have sufficient impact on improving the effectiveness of teaching over time.
- Leaders and managers do not all have a robust understanding of data about students' achievement, nor do they ensure this information is used accurately to plan lessons.

### The school has the following strengths

- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress because the teaching and support they receive is now good in Key Stage 4.
- Students studying vocational subjects and those who learn off site make good progress.
- Students achieve well in subjects where teaching is regularly good, including in music and art and design.
- The students feel secure and speak confidently about how to keep themselves safe. Attendance is above average.
- Governors ask all the right questions. They probe the school's actions and outcomes rigorously and challenge leaders and managers to secure rapid improvements.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed a wide range of lessons. Fourteen observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher or individual members of the senior leadership team. One inspector carried out short visits to a range of lessons.
- The inspectors talked with many students during the two days and spoke formally with five groups of students. They observed the students at breaks and lunchtimes and during an assembly.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and subject leaders, members of the governing body, the head of the school improvement service in Oldham and the school's improvement partner.
- The inspectors looked at a variety of documentation, including information about the achievement of the different groups of students represented in the school. They looked at examples of the students' work, checked records of their behaviour, attendance and exclusions, and policies designed to help keep them safe.
- In carrying out the inspection, the inspectors took into account the 52 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 38 responses given by staff to the questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Lynne Blakelock, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Stephen Doyle	Additional Inspector
Marcia Harding	Additional Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Additional Inspector
David Woodhouse	Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), 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

- The school is much larger than most other secondary schools.
- Most students are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students known to be disadvantaged and therefore supported through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium funding is additional government funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those that are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school does not use early entry in mathematics.
- The school uses alternative places at Oldham College, Skill Force, Gateway and Mahdlo for a few students to learn away from the school.
- The school is a Foundation School with Cooperative Trust Status. It works in partnership with five associated trust partner primary schools. It also works with the Failsworth Achievement Board which has recently been established to provide support from effective schools to those schools seeking to improve.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least consistently good across all year groups and quickens students' progress, especially in English and mathematics, by ensuring that:
  - the tasks set for all groups and abilities of students, including boys, the most able and the disadvantaged, provide them with a good level of challenge and enable them to achieve their potential
  - marking regularly tells students how well they are doing and what they need to do next to make further progress
  - teachers' questioning encourages and promotes students' further thinking and progress.
- Improve students' literacy skills by making sure that:
  - the school reviews its literacy policy to ensure that it addresses all aspects of literacy and that it is delivered in ways that meet the needs of all groups and abilities of students effectively
  - literacy teaching focuses on developing students' reading, use of grammar and the accuracy of their spelling and punctuation
  - expectations of the presentation, handwriting and layout of students' work are consistently high across the school.
- Ensure that students' have good attitudes to learning by making sure that:
  - teaching effectively involves and interests students so that they want to learn
  - there are consistently high expectations of students' behaviour for learning
  - all staff implement the behaviour policy promptly and consistently in all lessons.
- Increase the impact of leadership and management at all levels by ensuring that:
  - all leaders and managers have an accurate understanding of what data are saying about students' progress and that they ensure that teachers use this information effectively to set work that meets the

students' needs

- leaders and managers identify exactly what the weaknesses in teaching are in their areas of responsibility and that they check to make certain that these weaknesses have been robustly addressed
  - students' targets are realistically challenging so that all students can attain their potential.
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## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leaders and managers have not been effective enough to stop the decline in the quality of teaching over time; consequently students' achievement is now inadequate. Leaders currently do not have the capacity to move the school forward. Several areas for improvement from the last inspection have not been addressed effectively. Activities in lessons are still not matched well enough to students' capabilities and students continue to lose interest in their learning.
- The headteacher and the senior leadership team know that progress in English and mathematics is inadequate and that there is underachievement in several other subjects including for groups of students of differing abilities. While the leaders and staff show great determination to improve the school, for which they care and work hard, it is taking too long to reverse the downward trends.
- Leaders are not concentrating on the main barriers to improvement; consequently their actions have not had sufficient impact on accelerating students' progress and have not ensured that students leave school with good levels of literacy and numeracy.
- Despite the major focus on improving teaching, too much is still not good enough to raise standards and accelerate progress. Although senior leaders check the quality of teaching and students' work, they have not picked up some of the inconsistencies in practice that are barriers to quicker progress and have not addressed them effectively. During joint observations, the leaders' overarching judgements about the quality of teaching were accurate. However, some records of lesson observations fail to evaluate the impact of teaching on learning over time and therefore do not identify specific areas for improving teaching.
- Newly qualified teachers should not be appointed.
- The school is using the performance targets that it sets for teachers to improve their practice. Those that are linked to students' progress are helpful in achieving this, because they are measurable and challenging. However, some teachers' targets focus more on teaching strategies, rather than their impact on teaching and students' progress.
- Until recently, there has been insufficient focus on embedding detailed analysis and initiatives at Key Stage 3. The school is addressing this now, and starting to track the students' progress much more rigorously, in order to quicken progress from Year 7.
- Middle leaders and managers, such as subject and key stage coordinators, show a clear commitment to developing their monitoring and coaching roles. There are, however, variations in their understanding and use of data. There is not enough of a focus on students' progress, as well as their attainment, and assessment information is not always used effectively by teachers to set work at the right level for students. While students have targets set from detailed data, some are overambitious, and unrealistic, with students being expected to achieve too much in a short time.
- The local authority is fully aware of the school's situation and knows that the school has reacted to some issues, rather than identifying and addressing them before they become a problem. It has brokered very appropriate and wide-ranging support to help the school to improve, including the recently established Failsworth Achievement Board. Some initiatives now need more careful consideration as to their effectiveness, including, for example, the activities to improve literacy throughout the school.
- While disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve well in Key Stage 4, the school does not ensure equal opportunities for the success of other groups of students, because the quality of teaching and learning opportunities are too variable. The curriculum is not always sufficiently interesting or relevant for some students for example, in encouraging boys to read more.
- Disadvantaged students receive a range of help, including from extra mathematics and English staff, and from the five pupil premium coordinators. However not enough disadvantaged students are making at least the progress expected of them, indicating that the impact of the spending is inadequate. Off-site provision, however, is giving the students who access it a good start to preparing them for work and developing their personal skills.
- The curriculum provides an appropriate range of subjects that can be studied, and activities that encourage students' personal development. After-school activities are popular and diverse, such as dodgeball, basketball, art, music and performance skills. All subjects have an extensive revision timetable.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and British values are promoted regularly through the school's day-to-day routines and through its expectations. Teaching provides some rich opportunities for the students to embrace different cultures and to discuss their moral views.
- The school provides appropriate careers information and guidance, including about options, and helps the students to develop skills to support their post-16 choices, such as learning interview techniques and

writing letters of application to colleges. The students feel well-informed about subject choices for Year 9.

- Responses to Parent View confirm that most parents who responded agree that they receive valuable information about their children's progress. The school takes its duty of care towards the students very seriously. Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements and help to ensure that the students remain safe. The governing body oversees and checks procedures regularly, as part of quality assurance, including the attendance, progress and attitudes of students who learn off site.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - There is a full complement of governors and new governors are 'buddied' with existing governors to help them settle into their roles quickly. They participate in regular training, which includes an induction package for the new governors. The governing body keeps a close eye on the budget, knows that it balances and ensures that money is spent where it is most needed.
  - The governing body has a good and comprehensive knowledge of the school's work. It uses the detailed information about progress and teaching provided by the headteacher and other leaders to ask very challenging questions about the school's performance.
  - The governors have specific roles in checking the school's work and link with subjects to ensure a good knowledge of each of their areas of responsibility. This contributes well to the good range of information that they collect for themselves. For example, one governor has recently spent a morning with the attendance team, checking their systems. Another governor links with the special educational needs department and has a good understanding of the new practices and how they are being implemented. The Trust governor ensures that students are well-informed about post-16 education.
  - The governing body knows how pupil premium money is spent and is aware that the achievement gap is not narrowing as it should. Therefore it is checking the impact of support strategies increasingly carefully. Governing body minutes show that they also know that progress in English and mathematics is inadequate and that teaching needs to be strengthened. They are ensuring that changes to the curriculum and careful tracking of progress start in Year 7.
  - Governors can explain the rationale behind teachers' performance targets and do not agree to pay rises unless targets are met.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

## requires improvement

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Behaviour in lessons varies between subjects and teachers. This is often because the expectations of behaviour are too low in lessons and teachers do not always use the school's behaviour policy promptly enough. Some students find the 100-minute lessons too long for them to sustain positive attitudes and good behaviour.
- Although students are very attentive in lessons where teaching is good, a few become restless when learning does not interest them or when work is too hard or too easy. They stop concentrating and chat to other students; as a result, learning slows.
- Many students consistently try hard to learn and they want to achieve as well as they can. They arrive at lessons ready to learn and with positive attitudes.
- The proportion of students who are excluded from school continues to fall as the school works with them and their parents to improve their behaviour.
- The students are proud of their environment. They take pride in looking smart in their uniform. They keep their classrooms tidy. However, some students drop litter in the lunch areas rather than be bothered to find a bin.
- Behaviour around the school is generally very sensible, including in the dining hall and when going up the staircases.
- The students mix well with their peers. Most of them like being in tutor groups that have representatives from each year in them, because this arrangement enables students from different year groups to get to know each other, learn from and support each other.
- Students have responsibilities, such as school ambassadors which help them to develop a range of personal skills.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. It is also good for those who learn at other places, because their safety, well-being and behaviour are checked regularly.
- The students say that they feel safe because the site is secure and because they can all think of a

member of staff who they would confide in if they had a problem.

- Students do not think that bullying is a problem. It happens occasionally, but staff take it very seriously and deal with it quickly.
- Through assemblies and citizenship lessons, the students learn how to keep themselves safe, including when using the Internet. They can list a number of potentially dangerous situations when using the Internet.
- The students demonstrate British values in their belief that they are all equal and equally valued, whatever their views, backgrounds or lifestyles. They know that prejudice of any kind, including homophobia, goes against the tolerance and fairness that they should show towards each other and which the school promotes.
- Students' attendance is above average, due to the school's sustained efforts to promote better attendance rates. The attendance of disadvantaged students has improved.

### The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- The quality of teaching is very inconsistent. Over time it results in learning that is too slow overall and contributes to some students' weaker attitudes to learning.
- The school places a high emphasis on the teaching of literacy, but this is not carefully planned. Although students in Key Stage 3 are required to read at the start of each lesson, there is only occasionally any effective purpose to this. Students do not get the chances to develop more complex reading skills. While some students like reading for enjoyment, others do not and they switch off.
- Not enough attention is given to developing and practising the students' individual grammatical skills, in English and other subjects. Consequently, the quality of sentence construction is often well below that which is expected for their age and students lack the necessary skills to make the progress that they should.
- Spelling, punctuation, handwriting and presentation are not a consistent focus across the school, which again affects standards in writing. Some students take little care to keep their books neat.
- For some students the work is too hard in lessons while it is too easy for others; consequently some students lose interest and cannot make progress. In a few lessons, students copy out of text books, which does not add value to their learning.
- Questioning of students is variable in its impact. In some teaching, questions are not aimed specifically at the levels at which different students are working and do not encourage students to think more deeply about what they are learning.
- There is some good teaching which typically enables the students to learn well. In a mathematics lesson, Year 11 students became increasingly confident in expressing their views, through questioning that quickened their understanding. They made good progress in converting a number into a ratio, were all involved in solving problems, and the teacher, who knew their needs well, provided step-by-step teaching, to ensure that they all thoroughly understood the concept.
- Students generally respond to teachers' comments about the corrections that they need to make and this activity also reminds them of what they have just learnt. While some teachers' marking is effective, that of others is not. There is, for example, inconsistency in telling students what they know and understand and how to make further progress.

### The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- The standards students attain by the end of Year 11 are too low and in 2014 declined in many of the key subject areas, especially for boys. The proportion of students achieving 5 A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics has been well below average for the last three years. The school's predictions for improvement were not met in 2014, particularly for the proportion of students achieving A\* to C grades in English, and in the proportion making the expected progress in English.
- Students generally join Year 7 with average standards, but by the time they leave in Year 11, standards are below average; consequently their achievement is inadequate.  
Students do not make the progress expected of them in English due to the weaknesses in their writing skills not being properly addressed. The students also do not make the progress expected of them in subjects such as science, languages, and humanities.
- Progress in mathematics is too slow because teaching in mathematics is too variable to ensure that the students have all of the necessary skills by the end of Year 11.

- Although the standards of the most-able pupils rose this year, they did not make the progress expected of them in some subjects because the quality of teaching over time has been too variable.
- The school's forecast for the performance of the current Year 11 students suggests good improvement, but their predictions are heavily dependent upon a significant programme of intervention in Year 11. The variable quality of day-to-day teaching and the quality of students' work means that these improvements are fragile.
- In 2013, disadvantaged students achieved standards in English that were a grade lower than those other students in the school who were not disadvantaged, and one- and- a third grades lower in mathematics. Compared to non disadvantaged students nationally, they were one- and- three- quarter grades behind in both English and mathematics. This year the data available show that the proportion of disadvantaged students achieving 5 A\* to C grades, including in English and mathematics at GCSE level, was substantially lower than that of the other students in the school.
- Students who do not achieve the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 are given specific support to raise their skills as soon as they join Year 7. Almost all eligible students make good progress in response to this extra support.
- Students with disabilities and with special educational needs learn well overall, because the special educational needs department is managed well and students receive good support from the staff, especially when they are in Key Stage 4.
- Students achieve well in, music, religious education, and art and design. Standards are above average in subjects such as information technology, citizenship textiles and physical education.
- Those students who study vocational subjects and those who learn off site achieve well because the courses match their interests and career aspirations.



## 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>	105735
<b>Local authority</b>	Oldham
<b>Inspection number</b>	442376

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>	1,480
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ann Hanaghan
<b>Headteacher</b>	John Meagher
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 February 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 6883900
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