

Withernsea High School

Specialising In Humanities

Hull Road, Withernsea, HU19 2EQ

Inspection dates

4–5 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth-form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Despite an improving picture in many subjects, the proportion of students attaining 5 or more good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, has declined since the previous inspection, and is well below the national average.
- The progress made by a minority of students in English and mathematics, especially those with special educational needs, and the most able students, falls short of national expectations.
- Teaching, while improving, remains too variable and still requires improvement. Key leaders and managers have not yet secured consistently good teaching in most subjects.
- A minority of teachers do not plan carefully enough to meet all students' needs, and do not check thoroughly students' progress in lessons.
- Marking does not always encourage students to amend their work in order to deepen their thinking.
- In a small proportion of lessons, a minority of students do not show enough commitment and determination to give of their best.
- Not all middle and senior leaders are consistent in using the school's revised approaches to set challenging targets for all students, and check the progress made towards them.
- The impact of the regular training and development opportunities for teachers, and teaching assistants, is not systematically tested by all leaders and managers to maximise the impact of all adults' work on students' learning and achievement.
- The sixth form requires improvement because teaching is too variable. Some students do not achieve well enough, especially in Year 12.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and governors have high expectations. They have made significant changes since the previous inspection that are starting to improve teaching and to raise achievement in a number of subjects, especially in science.
- Attendance has risen since the previous inspection, and both persistent absence and exclusions have fallen.
- Behaviour around the school is calm and orderly. Students enjoy coming to school and are welcoming of visitors.
- Parents are increasingly positive about the school's work. They believe that key leaders and managers make every effort to respond to any concerns raised. A very large majority say they would recommend the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 35 different lessons, of which three were joint observations with the school’s senior leaders. In addition, inspectors visited four tutor groups during the school day.
- Students’ work was sampled in lessons, and a separate detailed sampling of work was carried out across Years 9 to 11 in English and mathematics.
- Inspectors talked with students from Years 7 to 13.
- Inspectors also reviewed a range of documents, including the school’s own data on current students’ progress, planning and monitoring documentation, minutes of governing body meetings, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents pertaining to safeguarding.
- Meetings were held with governors and school staff, including those with management responsibilities. A discussion also took place with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors evaluated the 25 responses of parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View), as well as responses from parents to the school’s own questionnaires. Inspectors also took account of the views of 39 members of the school’s staff through the completed inspection questionnaires.

Inspection team

Andrew Swallow, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Patrick Hargreaves	Additional Inspector
Lesley Powell	Additional Inspector
Bernard Clark	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average secondary school. The number of students on roll has fallen since the previous inspection.
- Most students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students, and therefore eligible for support through the pupil premium funding, is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well above the national average.
- No students are educated off-site.
- No students are entered early for GCSE examinations.
- In 2013, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school receives support from the local authority, Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Teaching School, Newcastle upon Tyne, and South Hunsley School, East Riding of Yorkshire.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant staffing changes, including middle leaders and governors. The roles and responsibilities of senior leaders have also been reorganised.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching across Years 7 to 11, and in the sixth form, by:
 - ensuring all teachers have high expectations of what all students can achieve
 - ensuring that all teachers systematically check students' understanding in lessons, and adapt work accordingly to challenge, in particular, those with special educational needs and the most able
 - ensuring that all teachers provide regular feedback to students about how they can improve their work, and insist they respond accordingly.
- Raise students' attainment and accelerate their progress, particularly across Years 7 to 11 in English and mathematics, but also across Year 12 in the sixth form, by:
 - pinpointing students' underachievement sooner and setting short-term targets for improvement that are rigorously checked by teachers and middle leaders
 - maximising opportunities across all subjects to reinforce and enhance students' reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Improve the effectiveness of all key leaders and managers, by:
 - clarifying approaches to the setting of stretching targets for all students, especially those with special educational needs and the most able, and measuring the progress they make, particularly across Years 7 to 9
 - ensuring that the impact of the regular training and development opportunities for teachers, and teaching assistants, is reviewed thoroughly, and any consistent shortfalls in performance are acted upon.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, there have been many changes in middle leadership, and a reorganisation of faculties. In addition, the roles of senior leaders have been revised. New processes and policies have been introduced, including new target-setting procedures, and an enhanced system to check students' progress. These changes have not yet had sufficient time to impact fully on the quality of teaching, students' learning and their achievement, across the school.
- A new director of sixth form has also recently been appointed. While priorities for reducing variability in sixth-form teaching and for accelerating Year 12 students' rates of progress are well conceived, actions have only just been put into place.
- These many changes have taken much time. They have resulted in some inconsistencies. For example, not all middle and senior leaders are consistent in the way they set challenging targets for all students, including those in Years 7 to 9, and review accurately the progress made towards them.
- Although much training and professional development for teaching staff takes place regularly, not all of these opportunities are followed up systematically, nor is their impact on students' learning checked rigorously. As a consequence, teaching remains too variable, at present, to ensure that enough students make good or better progress.
- The headteacher has high aspirations for all students. He has tackled rigorously shortfalls in teaching in English, since the previous inspection. At the same time, he has managed effectively changes in staffing across a number of subjects, changes in subject leadership, and changes in governance. In addition, he has overseen strategies to improve students' attendance and reduce the numbers excluded from school.
- Senior leaders are fully committed to moving the school forwards and ensuring higher outcomes for all students. Middle leaders are increasingly more involved in reviewing the school's work. The school has an accurate view of how well it is doing. The school improvement plan is focused on addressing aspects of teaching that still require improvement, as well as ensuring that more students make better-than-expected progress, and attain the highest GCSE grades, more quickly.
- More rigorous performance management links the quality of teaching and students' achievement to salary progression. The headteacher collects appropriate information in order to make the right decisions about teachers' movement up the salary scale.
- Key leaders know students well and increasingly remove barriers to learning. As a result, most now have an equal opportunity to succeed. Nonetheless, a minority of students with special educational needs, and a minority of the most able students, do not achieve as well as they might, especially in English and mathematics.
- The school's curriculum meets most students' needs adequately. Arrangements to support the move from primary to secondary school, especially for those whose literacy and numeracy skills are not well developed, are increasingly effective.
- Assemblies, tutor groups, and alternative curriculum days, prepare students appropriately for life in modern Britain. They promote the importance of freedom for all individuals, and the significance of mutual respect, particularly for those from different faiths and cultures.
- Careers education and advice is instrumental in reducing the number of students each year who do not continue in education, employment or training, when they leave the school.
- Students have access to a range of sporting, musical and performing events, and extra-curricular activities, that make fitting contributions to their personal development. Community dance evenings, sporting fixtures, world bank debates, holocaust memorial commemorations, and participation in projects such as the big bang fair and the building of solid fuel model rockets, all enrich students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.
- These aspects of the school's work help to promote students' understanding of the importance of equality of opportunity, and the valuing of people from different countries, cultures and backgrounds.
- The school makes good use of its pupil premium funding to maximise the achievements of disadvantaged students. The appointment of additional teachers and mentors, and the introduction of a bespoke summer school, have reduced margins in performance between disadvantaged students and their peers, over time, and are continuing to close gaps throughout the school.
- Parents are supportive of the school. A very large majority indicate they would readily recommend the school to other families.

■ The governance of the school:

- There have been significant changes in the governance of the school since the previous inspection. Governors have also commissioned an external review of their work. As a result, governors are more confident in requesting specific information about the school's performance, are regular visitors to the school, and frequently challenge the headteacher and key leaders about students' outcomes. They recognise fully the need to raise overall achievement, as a matter of urgency, and have already put in place plans to drive more rapidly this work forwards.
- By carefully scrutinising the school's checks on the quality of teaching, governors have a clear view of where it is the most variable, and needs to improve.
- Governors play an active role in managing the performance of the headteacher, and ensure that challenging objectives are set annually to drive the school forwards. They receive appropriate information about the salaries of all staff and decisions about teachers' applications for promotion. As a result, governors have a good understanding of the effectiveness of the management of teachers' performance across the school.
- The school's work to keep students safe meets statutory requirements, and is kept appropriately under review.
- Governors carefully check how effectively the school uses its additional pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding to raise achievement. For example, they have authorised bespoke mentoring arrangements, and additional time for adults to enhance students' reading and mathematical skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students still requires improvement. This is because in a small proportion of lessons, a minority of students do not show enough commitment and determination to give of their best. This is particularly so where teachers' expectations are not high enough in some subjects and the planned activities are insufficiently challenging. Students do not yet show enough desire to improve their work, in response to teachers' written and verbal feedback.
- Around the school, when moving between lessons, at breaks and lunchtimes, in the dining and cloakroom areas, the vast majority of students relate very positively towards one another. The overall school atmosphere is calm and orderly.
- Students wear their school uniform with pride, and say how much behaviour has changed for the better, as of late. They confirm that there is little bullying in school, and talk positively about how they are encouraged to support each other. The endeavours of many staff are paying off in promoting students' higher expectations of themselves. As a result, attendance across Years 7 to 11 has risen considerably since the previous inspection, and is now average.
- In the sixth form, students attend regularly, make good use of their study time, and have increasingly higher expectations of what they can achieve.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure still requires improvement. This is because, although persistent absence and exclusions are falling notably, a minority of students continue to attend school irregularly, and above-average numbers are still excluded on a regular basis.
- Students talk very positively about the support they receive from all adults, and are particularly proud of the responsibilities they are afforded in leading House activities, contributing to assemblies, representing their tutor groups on the school council, and generally working towards making the school a better place. Sixth-form students increasingly volunteer to mentor younger peers, and make strong contributions to whole-school charity work.
- The school's motto, 'Working together, achieving more' is embodied in the strong relationships between adults and students, and between students and their peers. Daily tutor group experiences, assemblies, personal, social and health education experiences, all contribute to students' good awareness of the different types of risks and insensitive behaviours, including homophobic and cyber-bullying, and how to keep safe in and out of school.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is improving. Inadequate practice has been tackled robustly since the previous inspection, with much eradicated. This has resulted in large changes to staffing in some subjects. In some subjects, new staff have not yet been able to make sufficient impact to address historical weaknesses in students' knowledge and shortfalls in key skills. This is particularly the case in English, and to some extent in mathematics.
- Teaching is equally variable in the sixth form, as it is across Years 7 to 11, and for similar reasons.
- Not all teaching provides all groups of students with work that gets the best out of them because expectations are not always high enough. On occasions, teaching in some lessons does not stretch the most able to think deeply about what they are learning, and whether they can do even better. Often, students with special educational needs are moved on too quickly, without having had sufficient time to absorb what they have learned, and to make sense of it for themselves.
- Some teachers do not check students' learning and progress carefully enough, missing opportunities to adapt activities to meet learners' changing needs.
- The quality of marking is variable. While some teachers provide regular and detailed comments on students' work, others do not tell students precisely what they are doing well, and how they need to improve. Consequently, not all students know what to do next. Frequently, teachers' expectations of students' responses to the comments that they make, are not high enough. As a result, not enough students challenge themselves to improve their initial work.
- The contributions that teaching assistants make to students' progress over time are inconsistent. This is because some teachers do not communicate sufficiently with them in lessons, and do not check the nature of the support they provide for individual students, or its impact on their learning.
- Relationships between students and adults in almost all classes are very positive. This encourages students' personal and social development.
- Many teachers, in many subjects, motivate students to want to do well, and plan challenging, but enjoyable experiences. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson, almost all students were eager to consider the key features of a great speech, hugely stimulated by a television extract of Barack Obama's inaugural presidential campaign speech. Similarly, in a Year 9 history lesson, students were totally immersed in gathering information about how dogs were used in both World Wars, stimulated by passionate teaching and exciting resources, and by the provocative assertion that animals were possibly more important than the technology of the day.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- From below-average starting points on entry to Year 7, students have made no better than expected progress overall in the past. By the end of Year 11, the proportion of students attaining five or more good GCSE qualifications is below average and has declined significantly since the previous inspection. The school's latest information, backed up by students' recent work across Years 7 to 11, shows that progress in English, following a significant dip in 2014, is picking up. This is also the case in mathematics, where historical underperformance is being turned around. Improvements have also been made to achievement in the sixth form.
- The overall fall in standards is due largely to significant changes in staffing, and historically poor teaching, in English. This has resulted in inadequate progress by many students, and has impacted on end-of-Year-11 whole-school attainment in 2014. The school has taken robust action to rectify this.
- The quality of teaching and learning in English has been rigorously overhauled by the headteacher and governors. A new subject leader, and a largely new teaching team, have been recently put in place. The impact of these changes has been rapid, as seen through students' current progress in their work, particularly since the beginning of the academic year. The school's latest information, backed up by the quality of work in books, indicates that students' progress in English is improving strongly across all years.
- The recent improvements in teaching have not yet been able to address fully some of the shortfalls in students' writing skills, particularly in the use of paragraphs to sequence ideas, and in the development of complex sentences, with a variety of punctuation for effect. A minority of students with special educational needs lack confidence in analysing how authors use specific language for effect, and in using a range of techniques to enhance their writing. Not all of the most able students challenge themselves enough to write at length, and with sufficient detail. Leaders and managers are very aware that there is still work to do to further improve achievement in English.
- Achievement in mathematics also requires improvement. In 2013, the proportion of Year 11 students leaving the school, having made expected and more than expected rates of progress, was close to

national expectations. In 2014, these figures fell, largely due to the school's decision to enter early a large number of students for GCSE examinations, and partly to changes in staffing that hindered some students' progress. The early entry policy has now ceased, and staffing is now stable.

- The school's latest information, supported by students' work across all years, shows that a large majority of students are now making increasingly good progress in mathematics. A minority of students with special educational needs are not yet confident in applying all four number operations to solve simple word problems. Similarly, a minority of the most able students are not sufficiently challenged to apply common formulae and expressions to find solutions to 'real-life' scenarios.
- Senior leaders recognise that not enough is yet being done by many teachers to reinforce and enhance students' reading, writing and mathematical skills, in all subjects.
- In a number of subjects, a very large majority of students make good progress, and attain above-average standards by the end of Key Stage 4. This is especially so in science, information and communication technology, business studies, history, geography and art and design.
- While most students with special educational needs achieve appropriately, a minority underperform. This is because the planned activities are often not tailored sufficiently to meet their needs, and they have insufficient time in many lessons to complete successfully what they are asked to do.
- Similarly, while the vast majority of the most able students achieve well, a minority do not reach the highest grades of which they are capable by the time they leave the school. Their written work sometimes lacks depth and detail, and they are not challenged sufficiently in some lessons to think and fully stretch themselves.
- Over time, disadvantaged students make good overall progress, with achievement margins closing with non-disadvantaged peers in English and mathematics. In 2013, disadvantaged pupils' attainment was one GCSE grade behind that of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally in English, and still over one GCSE grade behind in mathematics. In 2014, progress and attainment margins widened by the end of Year 11 in both subjects. Students' work and the school's latest information indicate that this is not uniformly the case, in English or mathematics, across all present year groups.
- Appropriate support is made available for students at risk of falling behind. For example, the Year 7 catch-up funding has been used to provide more one-to-one and small group specialist teaching, initially in reading, and to enhance students' confidence through bespoke mentoring. The school's information on the impact of these measures shows good gains, to date, for a large majority of students.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement. Year 13 attainment in 2014 improved substantially on 2013 outcomes, approaching national averages for many A-level and vocational courses. These outcomes represented generally good progress for this cohort of students. However, achievement by the end of Year 12 is no better than expected, over time.
- Inspection evidence shows that progress on AS courses is improving, as of late, because the variability in the quality of teaching is reducing.
- Overall sixth-form outcomes meet the national 16–19 interim minimum standards.
- Leaders and managers have been slow in introducing programmes to support students entering the sixth form without a GCSE grade 'C' or above, in English and mathematics. While support is now in place, and already showing a positive impact for a majority of students, especially with low prior attainment in English, some students left the sixth form in 2014 without a good level of achievement in English or mathematics.
- Teaching in the sixth form is improving, but there is too much variation across, and within, subjects. As a result, students do not make good, or better, progress, in all subjects.
- Students are positive about the quality of careers information and guidance they receive. Increasingly the curriculum offers a suitable range of academic and vocational courses, and is annually reviewed.
- The vast majority of students who complete their courses go on to study at university, some opting to take up apprenticeships or employment opportunities. The small number who do not move on to Year 13 are supported adequately to other destinations.
- Students show positive attitudes to learning, take private study time seriously, for the most part, and are good role models for younger students. Their attendance is good; they get on well together and support the school's activities in a number of ways. Examples include carrying out duties at break and lunchtime, mentoring younger students, and acting as ambassadors at different school events. Students pursuing engineering courses benefit from appropriate work-experience placements.
- Through the regular tutoring arrangements, assemblies, bespoke visitors and events, their personal and employability skills are increasingly well developed. As a consequence, almost all students secure

placements in higher or further education and training, or employment, when they leave school.

- The newly appointed sixth-form leader has a clear understanding of the sixth form's strengths and areas for improvement. Appropriate monitoring and tracking systems are in place to check students' progress, to provide additional support for any students who fall behind with their work, and to improve further 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	118075
Local authority	East Riding of Yorkshire
Inspection number	442266

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	840
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	131
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caroline Heaton
Headteacher	Richard Williman
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2012
Telephone number	01964 613133
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