

West Hill School

Thompson Cross, Stalybridge, Cheshire, SK15 1LX

Inspection dates

11–12 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Over recent years, students have not made the progress they ought to have made. This is particularly evident in mathematics and across Key Stage 3; consequently their achievement is inadequate.
- Standards by the end of Year 11 have been declining for three years; this is indicative of the academy's overall decline.
- The progress of disabled students, those with special educational needs and those eligible for free school meals is also inadequate.
- Teaching overall is inadequate. There is not enough good teaching to rapidly improve the rate of progress that students make.
- Teachers' expectations of what their students can achieve are too low. Teachers take too little account of the specific needs and abilities of students within their groups.
- Teachers' questioning skills are weak and as a consequence they do not extend students' understanding of what they are learning.
- The marking of students' work does not guide teachers' planning or help students understand precisely how they can improve their work.
- Students do not have sufficient opportunities to write at length; this limits their development of high-level literacy skills.
- Governors, leaders and managers at all levels are not demonstrating the capacity to drive the improvements necessary to accelerate students' achievement. They do not evaluate the effectiveness of their work in terms of the progress students make. Consequently, planning for rapid improvement throughout the academy is inadequate.
- Governors, leaders and managers do not hold each other and staff sufficiently to account.

The school has the following strengths

- The behaviour of students is consistently good, despite the weak teaching they receive. They have very positive attitudes to learning. The management of students' behaviour is a strength. Students behave well when moving around the academy.
- Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities and clubs.
- Students receive high-quality information, advice and guidance about their next steps in education, or training or employment.
- The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. Consequently, students demonstrate good social skills and have high moral standards.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 part-lessons taught by 33 of the 55 teachers employed by the academy. Inspectors worked with senior staff while observing teaching and learning and reviewing work previously completed by students.
- Inspectors spoke to many students during breaks, lunchtimes, and lessons. They also spoke to a group of Year 7 students about their skills in literacy and numeracy.
- Inspectors observed activities taking place during form and registration time.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, senior leaders and other staff. A discussion was held with two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including reports, internal and external data about students' attainment and progress, behaviour and attendance records and students' work. They scrutinised safeguarding procedures and records.
- During the inspection, 140 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and parental surveys conducted by the academy were taken into account. Inspectors reviewed 66 responses to the inspection questionnaire completed by staff.

Inspection team

Neil MacKenzie, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Pamela Hemphill	Additional Inspector
Peter McKay	Additional Inspector
Alan Parkinson	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

- West Hill School is a slightly below-average size secondary academy for boys.
- Since the last inspection, a new subject leader for mathematics was appointed for September 2013. A new subject leader for English takes up post in January 2014.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is lower than found nationally. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is significantly lower than the national average.
- The proportion of students who are supported by the pupil premium is lower than the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Most students are White British with an increasing number who have Indian or Pakistani heritage.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is lower than average.
- The academy uses alternative provision at Tameside College for part-time vocational courses. Twenty-eight students attend from Years 10 and 11. In Years 8 and 9, seven students develop their personal skills through short term, part-time activities run by the Prince's Trust.
- In 2012, the academy met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- West Hill School converted to become an academy school on 1 August 2011. When its predecessor school, West Hill School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by eradicating teaching that is inadequate or requires improvement in order to ensure all students achieve well in all subjects and particularly in mathematics and throughout Key Stage 3 by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what students can achieve
 - ensuring all teachers use assessment information to plan in advance learning activities that provide suitable challenge through setting tasks that enable students to make at least good progress
 - increasing the opportunities students have to explain their thinking
 - marking students' work more consistently so that students receive clear guidance for improvement, and making certain that all students follow this advice
 - improving the quality of questioning to help students think more deeply and understand more fully
 - further improving students' literacy skills by expecting them to write more lengthy responses
 - setting good quality homework more frequently
 - ensuring the best practice of some teaching assistants is adopted by all, in finding a good balance between supporting students and letting them work things out for themselves.

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders, managers and governors by:
 - more accurately evaluating the impact of their own work and the work of teachers on improving students' achievement
 - ensuring these evaluations and subsequent planning ensure further, and more rapid, improvement
 - more rigorously holding themselves and others to account for the quality of their work
 - undertaking an external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the academy's use of the pupil premium, in order to assess how this and other aspects of leadership and governance may be improved.

Ofsted will make recommendations on governance to the authority responsible for the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- The numbers of students in Key Stage 4 who have achieved five good passes at GCSE, including English and mathematics, have been in decline for the past three years. In 2013, the standards students attained by the end of Year 11 were slightly below average. Given that students usually join the academy with slightly above-average starting points, this represents inadequate achievement.
- With the exception of Year 11 students in 2012, rates of progress have been inadequate over time. The rate of progress students make, from their individual starting points, through Key Stage 3 is slow, and it does not accelerate sufficiently across Key Stage 4. The rates of progress students make in English and in mathematics are inadequate. There is some variability from year to year although generally, students make weaker progress in mathematics. The strongest achievement by students is in art.
- The progress that disabled students and those with special educational needs make is inadequate because too few teachers skilfully adapt their teaching to meet the specific needs of these students.
- The progress of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is also inadequate. The gaps between their achievement and those students within the academy who are not eligible for support through the pupil premium vary considerably from year to year. In 2012, this group of students attained approximately two GCSE grades lower in mathematics than their academy peers; much worse than the one grade difference in the previous year. In English, over the same period of time, this group of students under-attained by approximately one grade in comparison with other students. Data the academy has for its current students suggest the gap in achievement is closing in mathematics yet widening in English. The academy does not have an effective strategy to systematically improve the performance of this group of students. There is no current data available to compare the relative attainment of these groups of students.
- The academy's promotion of equality of opportunity is inadequate because of the widespread underachievement by different groups of pupils.
- The achievement of students with Indian or Pakistani heritage is much better than that of other students, although it still requires improvement. Students who speak English as an additional language also make better progress than their peers.
- Over time, rates of progress for the most able students are generally better than those of middle-and-low-ability students. In 2013, however, the number of students attaining the highest GCSE grades dropped because there were fewer very high ability students in that year group.
- Students in Years 8 to 10 who receive part of their education through other providers follow vocational and social development courses. This provision meets their needs well and the majority make expected progress. However, the progress for the same group of students in Year 11 is inadequate because these students are not making expected progress in English and mathematics.
- The academy provides catch-up sessions to students who join in Year 7 with weaknesses in reading and mathematics. These students say this support is helpful. However, the academy does not measure the impact of this provision with sufficient precision and so they are not clear how effective it is.
- The academy currently uses early entry to examinations innovatively. This has motivated students and helped to identify weaknesses for further targeted support. Students in Year 11 who have completed their GCSE in mathematics are undertaking an additional mathematics course, or studying the application of mathematics through economics and personal finance. This approach is effective because it does not limit most-able students in continuing to develop their mathematical understanding.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate because too many teachers have low expectations of what their students can achieve over time. Teaching is better in Key Stage 4. However it still requires improvement as it is not good enough to compensate for the slower progress made by students in most subjects, including in English and mathematics, across Key Stage 3.
- Where teaching is weak, teachers do not adapt activities to meet the needs of students within their group. These teachers tend to plan and deliver lessons to the perceived average ability level within the class. Questions asked by the teacher often lead to merely superficial responses, and rely on the basic strategy of 'hands up'. Consequently, the teacher is not clear about how well the majority of students are learning. When a misconception is noticed by the teacher, the whole class is expected to concentrate on the explanation, slowing the progress of the majority when there is no need. On occasions, those students making the most progress will complete a task, and ask the teacher how they should move on, only for the teacher to ask them to wait or read their book until the others catch up.
- Students are articulate and start this academy with good literacy and numeracy skills. The academy has recently undertaken an initiative to further improve students' literacy skills. The impact of this is variable as teachers are not consistently applying these strategies. Students have too few opportunities to write at length which restricts the development of their spelling, punctuation, grammar and powers of written expression.
- The academy has also recently taken steps to improve the quality and effectiveness of marking. Students' work is marked regularly and extensive use is made of self and peer assessment. However, the students are not yet sufficiently skilled in providing themselves or others with good strategies on how to improve their work. The quality of guidance that teachers give when marking students' work is variable. There are few examples where students make meaningful improvements as a result of reflecting on this type of advice.
- The majority of teachers do not plan lessons based on an assessment of the learning achieved during the previous lesson and hence do not match activities well enough to the needs of students.
- There is some good practice by teaching assistants where they use their skills and knowledge of students to help them make more rapid progress, however this is not widely spread. Other teaching assistants will sit with one student throughout the lesson; consequently, the student becomes dependent on the support and this restricts their ability to puzzle things out for themselves.
- A small proportion of parents raised concerns about the lack of homework given to students. Inspectors found that although some teachers set useful homework, in general it was not used well to promote learning.
- Where some students in this school make quicker rates of progress, they are required to think deeply about topics by having to justify their ideas and explain their thinking. Students are personally motivated to do well and their highly positive attitudes enable them to take full advantage of their time spent learning.
- Students are expected to have a reading book. They read often and most read well. Beyond their information and communication technology lessons, students get good opportunities to develop their computer skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' behaviour is good.
- Despite weak teaching, students have good attitudes to learning and often their progress is enhanced by their ambition to improve. When given the opportunity, students work very well collaboratively, supporting everyone's learning. The students generate a positive culture around the academy because they are respectful of others and their views.
- Students behave very well during breaks and lunch times because they are mature and respectful of each other. Movement in corridors, classrooms and across open spaces is calm and

orderly.

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students negotiate this complex site safely. They demonstrate care of their academy environment and take personal responsibility for being safe and they ensure others are safe too. The academy has high expectations of how students present themselves in their uniforms, and the students respond positively to this. Students' punctuality is good. Parents and students strongly believe they are safe within the academy environment.
- Students have a good understanding of all forms of bullying and they say there have been very few examples of bullying within the academy. They also say that when any bullying has been reported to members of staff, these were dealt with effectively and efficiently.
- Attendance has been consistently good over a long period. The numbers of students who do not attend regularly are reducing.
- The use of external exclusion has reduced this year and is below the national average. The use of withdrawal of students to work away from their peers for short periods is an effective strategy to further improve behaviour. However, sometimes this slows their progress as the class teachers do not always provide the students with work that is suitably challenging.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Governors, leaders and managers at all levels are not demonstrating the capacity to drive the improvements necessary to accelerate students' achievement. They have presided over a decline in the academy's overall effectiveness since the school became an academy.
- Leaders and managers of the academy, including subject leaders, have an inflated view of the quality of education the academy provides because, when evaluating the quality and impact of their own work and that of teachers, they fail to take the progress of students into account. So, for example, for the last academic year, academy records say that a high proportion of teaching was at least good, yet students' achievement was inadequate.
- The quality of the academy's planning, including that of leaders of subjects, is weak because leaders and managers do not evaluate the impact of previous or current developments. Leaders and managers do not hold other staff to account with sufficient rigour, including through effective use of performance-related pay.
- Teachers engage well with colleagues and leaders in discussion about self-improvement. However the impact of recent training is inconsistent across the academy with some teachers readily adopting new routines and strategies, while others are slow to change.
- Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is an integral and important aspect of this academy's work. A wide range of enrichment activities are well attended and enjoyed by the students. The students have many opportunities to take part in sporting and cultural activities. During an assembly, on the theme of 'light where there is darkness', students reflected on current world events which concluded with a moving and spiritually uplifting reflection on the life of Nelson Mandela. Religious and cultural differences are respected and celebrated.
- The leadership and management of behaviour and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective and meet requirements including for those students who follow part of their learning off site.
- The academy offers a good range of subjects which give breadth and balance to the students' learning.
- The students receive high-quality information, advice and guidance when choosing their Key Stage 4 courses and in preparation for when they leave the academy for their next stage of learning or training.

- Links with the local authority were maintained when the school became an academy. The local authority has had too few personnel to effectively support the academy's improvement. This situation is changing and the academy is receiving more local authority support. However this support has had too little time to make a significant difference in improving academy performance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have not challenged well enough the accuracy of judgements made by leaders and staff about students' achievement across the academy, and so have not been effective in holding leaders and managers to account and relating performance to salary progression.
 - Governors' over-reliance on the school's account of the quality of teaching and the leadership of teaching has impeded their ability to evaluate objectively the work of teachers.
 - Governors are fully familiar with how academy funding is spent, including additional funding to support students known to be eligible for the pupil premium. However, they do not know how effectively this spending improves students' progress or that its impact has been, and currently is, inadequate.

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	137020
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	433172

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	826
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	S Fildes
Headteacher	R Hewitt
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0161 338 2193
Fax number	0161 338 8293
Email address	admin@westhillschool.co.uk

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