

The Byrchall High School

Warrington Road, Wigan, Lancashire, WN4 9PQ

Inspection dates 3–4 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, with the support of governors and senior leaders, has successfully tackled weaknesses in teaching and in achievement across Years 7 to 11, especially in English. As a result, students' achievement and the quality of teaching have improved.
- Students attain above average results in examinations at the end of Year 11. Standards in English rose significantly in 2014 and students' progress now compares favourably to the national average.
- Teaching is good. Learning is most effective when students enjoy their lessons, when care is taken to match tasks to their different needs and when they are given detailed feedback on how to improve their work and given time to do so.
- Students appreciate their teachers' efforts and respond by working hard and behaving well, both in lessons and around the academy. They are welcoming and polite to each other and to adults.
- Students say they feel safe in the academy, and in surveys, parents confirm this. They know how to keep themselves safe in different circumstances because the academy teaches them well.
- Governors, leaders and managers understand the academy's strengths and weaknesses and have a clear plan for further improvement. As a result, the academy has the capacity to sustain and build upon its current improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teaching still requires improvement. Work is not always matched closely enough to the needs of all students and marking does not always give them enough guidance on how to improve their work. Students are not always expected to improve it or given opportunities to do so.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 38 lessons or parts of lessons. Three observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of academy documentation, including that relating to students' attainment, progress and behaviour. They also considered minutes of governing body meetings, safeguarding documentation and other key policies and procedures. They looked at the academy's view of how well it is doing and academy improvement planning.
- Discussions were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, senior and middle leaders, teachers, a representative from the local authority and an external consultant who has been working with the academy.
- Meetings were held with two groups of students and inspectors spoke with students in lessons and around the academy at break and during lunchtime. They looked at surveys of students' views carried out by the academy.
- Inspectors examined the work in students' books and listened to a group of students in Years 7 and 8 read.
- The 66 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were considered, as well as surveys of parents at parental consultation evenings carried out by the academy.

Inspection team

Anne Smedley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
John Ashley	Additional Inspector
Mary Lanovy-Taylor	Additional Inspector
Alan Parkinson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is similar in size to the average-sized secondary academy.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is small, as is the proportion who speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students, those supported by the pupil premium, is rising slightly, but is average. The pupil premium funding supports those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is well below average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- The academy has a specialism in mathematics and computing.
- The academy makes use of a range of providers to secure part-time vocational education for 70 students. These include St. Helen's Vocational Provision, Wigan Pupil Support Centre, Fixit, Western Skills Centre, Venture Learning and St. Edmund Arrowsmith High School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching for all students, so that overall it is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that marking and feedback in all subjects provides students with clear guidance on how to improve their work, and that students are not only expected to improve it, but are given the opportunity to do so
 - matching work closely to the needs of all students so that they all make equally good progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has implemented a clear and successful strategy for improving the academy. Systems for monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and of students' achievement have improved and are now rigorous. This has helped the academy to develop an accurate view of its own performance, identify and understand the key priorities and take effective action. The academy has correctly identified the need to further improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that work is always pitched at the right level of difficulty for students. It also recognises the need to build on the improvements in marking and feedback by ensuring that all students get sufficient guidance on how to improve their work and by insisting that all students are given the opportunity to respond and make their work better and that they do so.
 - Effective action has been taken since the last inspection to improve standards of attainment and progress in English. Students' attainment in 2014 was well above average and the proportions making expected progress compared favourably with national figures.
 - Measures being taken to improve the achievement of the most able are effective. Tracking of progress is robust and two coordinators have been appointed to help raise achievement and aspirations. Students say improvements in teaching have been made, and the work of current students shows that their attainment and progress is on track to reach higher standards.
 - The leadership of teaching is good and has improved. Teaching quality is checked by senior and middle leaders systematically and frequently, using a wide variety of methods. Teachers are supported to improve their teaching through a clear programme of training, including coaching.
 - The management of performance is clearly linked to Teachers' Standards and provides senior leaders with information that leads to a well-planned staff development programme, for example, to improve provision in English. The information is also used by the headteacher when making recommendations to governors on salary progression.
 - Steps have been taken to ensure that middle leaders are effective in their roles, and the improved quality of teaching and achievement show the success of this work. They all agree what needs to be done to further improve the academy to make it more successful, and they know how to do it.
 - The academy rejects discrimination in all its forms and places emphasis on fostering good relations. Academy leaders ensure that discrimination in all its forms is not tolerated. They strongly promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the impact of this can be seen in the good behaviour and respect that students show towards each other and to adults. This creates a strong sense of community within the academy.
 - Leaders and managers are fully committed to equality of opportunity and strive to ensure that all students reach their potential. They passionately hold the view that each individual matters and that everyone has something special to contribute. Disabled students and those with special educational needs are well cared for, and the gaps in progress between disadvantaged students and others have reduced.
 - A thorough review of the curriculum has led to an improved offer to students, making it more responsive to their needs and interests. An appropriate range of courses, both academic and vocational, is provided. The curriculum enables students to explore and develop tolerance, respect for others and the rule of law, as well as other aspects and thus prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
 - Opportunities extend beyond the academy day and give students the chance to participate in a wide range of educational visits and to enjoy artistic, sporting and cultural activities. The academy has developed links with schools in Tanzania, South Africa and Romania, with visits for students to Tanzania and Romania. They have good opportunities to take on leadership roles, for example as prefects, peer mentors, members of the academy council and as house captains. They also engage in fundraising for charities such as the Teenage Cancer Trust.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to target improvement in the progress of disadvantaged students, and gaps between these students and that of others nationally are closing.
- Careers information, advice and guidance are strong, enabling students to make good choices about their next steps. A very large majority progress successfully into further education, training and apprenticeships.
 - Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and are strong. These include robust monitoring of the attendance, behaviour and achievement of the students who attend part-time alternative provision.
 - The academy regularly seeks the views of parents and others to identify ways to strengthen and improve its effectiveness. In surveys carried out by the academy and in Parent View, a large majority confirms that the academy responds well to any concerns and almost all would recommend the academy to others.
 - The academy has been very pro-active in securing support and challenge from the local authority and

from others since the last inspection, and this has played an important part in the improvements made. The local authority has an accurate view of the standard of education provided for students.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body has an accurate view of the academy's performance, and its challenge and support have been instrumental in bringing about improvement since its last inspection. Governors receive better information from leaders on all aspects of the academy's work. Therefore, they have a good understanding of the progress students are making, and track their performance regularly. They have high, realistic ambitions and are committed to the academy's plan to improve the quality of teaching and the achievement of all students further. Governors ensure that all teachers, including the headteacher, are held to account through effective performance management, and are fully involved in decisions regarding the salary progression of teaching staff. Governors have a firm understanding of the impact of the pupil premium funding on successfully reducing the gaps between the progress of disadvantaged students and others. Resources are managed well. Governors ensure that safeguarding requirements are met, and that all are safe on the premises.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Students arrive well prepared for their lessons. The majority are punctual, smart, bring appropriate equipment and follow instructions from teachers. Most show pride in their work, as seen in their neat presentation in their books.
- Most students have positive attitudes to learning. They settle down quickly and work hard. Students enjoy their lessons and are engaged, particularly when care is taken to match tasks and resources to their different needs and interests.
- Most students behave well in lessons and around the academy. They are welcoming, considerate and polite, because they are expected to be and because they are well prepared through an effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural programme. Positive relationships between students and between adults and students promote a secure sense of community. In surveys, parents say that the academy makes sure its students are well behaved.
- The care provided for students is strong, and in surveys parents say their child is well looked after.
- The academy has effective systems in place to manage behaviour. Consequently, exclusions are below average and reducing.
- The behaviour of the students in part-time alternative provision is good.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good
- Students say they feel safe, and in surveys parents confirm that their children feel safe.
- The academy teaches students how to keep themselves safe in all circumstances effectively. They are well aware of different types of bullying, the risks relating to e-safety and how to make the right decisions in relation to their health, for example.
- Academy records show that bullying is rare and is dealt with quickly and effectively. Students say that bullying is rare and in surveys parents say that bullying is dealt with effectively.
- Attendance is broadly average. The attendance of some disadvantaged students needs to be improved.
- Robust arrangements are in place to ensure that the students using part-time alternative provision are safe.

The quality of teaching is good

- The impact of teaching on students' learning over time is good in most subjects, and has improved in English since the last inspection.
- Students learn well because teachers' knowledge of their subjects is strong, teachers are enthusiastic and they have high expectations. Teachers create a positive atmosphere for learning based on good relationships and, as a result, students try hard to do their best.
- Effective planning, together with appropriate activities, enable students to make a prompt start to their lessons and settle down quickly to learning. When suitable tasks are set, students enjoy their learning and

are fully engaged. In some lessons, the work set or range of activities do not always provide students with appropriate or challenging tasks that would help them learn even more effectively.

- Teachers use a wide range of resources and activities that stimulate interest and promote good learning so students are given opportunities to learn well, whatever their ability. For example, Year 10 students used information to begin to gain a secure understanding of the impact of the Second World War on people of black heritage in the USA. They demonstrated strong reading skills in finding information from a range of texts and photographs, and collaborated well to gather knowledge and help each other to understand the positive and negative impact of the war. Students used impressive skills to produce extended writing which demonstrated good gains in their learning. This is also a good example of the way the academy encourages students of different abilities to appreciate important social, moral and ethical issues.
- Students learn very well when topics are made relevant to them and where teaching draws on their own experience. A group of Year 7 students thoroughly enjoyed developing new skills as they made flapjacks, which they were looking forward to eating later, then engaged in lively, well-structured discussions about the different types of food consumed in other cultures. When asked to classify various ingredients into food groups, they enthusiastically shared their views and experience of tacos, sushi and noodles as they did so, showing that they had developed sound knowledge about healthy diets, as well as understanding and respect for aspects of other cultures.
- The teaching of literacy is well developed across the academy and teachers use good strategies to improve spelling, grammar and punctuation, and to extend students' use of vocabulary specific to each subject. Students apply numeracy skills well, such as the use of histograms in a Year 8 science lesson. They read widely and use their reading skills in all subjects effectively. They use information and communication technology (ICT) routinely, such as students in a Year 11 French lesson using tablet computers to help them with their listening and reading skills.
- Most marking includes guidance which helps students to do better, and students speak highly of improvements in this area, but these are not applied fully or consistently in all subjects. Some marking does not give students clear or precise enough guidance on how to improve their work further; opportunities for students to respond to their teachers' guidance are not consistently created, and students are not always expected to improve their work.
- Teachers use questioning well to gauge knowledge and understanding, deepen students' thinking and challenge them to explain their answers, developing good oracy skills at the same time.
- The effective use of teaching assistants supports students' learning well, and helps them to make good progress.
- The teaching of students in part-time alternative provision is good, and they achieve good results at the end of Year 11 in the subjects studied there.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students generally enter the academy with attainment that is well above average. At the end of Year 11, attainment is above average and in some measures it is well above average.
- Action taken to improve outcomes in English has been effective and in 2014 attainment was well above average. This has resulted in better progress for students, which compares favourably with the national average. In mathematics, attainment has been consistently above average over time, and progress in 2014 was in line with the national average. The proportions of students attaining a good examination grade in English and mathematics in 2014 were above the national average in both subjects.
- The work of current students in all years shows that they are making good or better progress across most subjects and are attaining increasingly higher standards in their work. Current students continue to make securely good progress in all year groups in English and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged students are making good progress and as a result, gaps in progress between these students and others nationally are closing over time in both English and mathematics. Gaps in attainment are also closing over time in both English and mathematics. In English in 2014, disadvantaged students' attainment improved to just under half a grade lower than others nationally and half a grade lower than others in the academy. In mathematics, their attainment improved to just under a grade lower than others nationally and a grade lower than others within the academy.
- Over time, disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress from their starting points. They receive good support which helps them to learn well.
- Year 7 catch-up funding, which is directed at those students whose attainment in mathematics and English is lower than that of their peers when they enter the academy, is used effectively. It is helping them to

make good progress with their reading and numeracy.

- Outcomes for the most-able students are above average in a number of subjects and in line with the most-able students nationally in English and mathematics. Almost all of them attain five or more good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics. While their progress overall in 2014 was below average, measures taken to tackle this have been effective, and the most-able students currently at the academy are making good progress.
- The academy has made use of early entry to examinations in the past, but has a new policy which no longer supports early entry.
- The students who attend part-time alternative provision make good progress, because they maintain their engagement in education, develop vocational skills which prepare them for their next steps and do well in accredited courses, including GCSEs.

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	138699
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	462298

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	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	969
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	P Tushingam
Headteacher	A Birchall
Date of previous school inspection	10 April 2013
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