

Little Lever School

Church Street, Bolton, BL3 1BT

Inspection dates

31 October–1 November 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- It has improved since the last inspection because the headteacher, senior leaders and governors have successfully concentrated on improving teaching and raising students' achievement. Weaknesses have been tackled successfully.
- Many new staff have been appointed. This has strengthened the quality of leadership at all levels, raised attainment and improved teaching, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Expectations of what students and staff can do are higher. Staff are well managed, receive good training and feel valued.
- Students behave well, feel safe in school and attend regularly. They show respect for staff, visitors and each other.
- There is now a greater clarity and consistency in the systems the school uses for tracking students' progress, marking their work and monitoring their behaviour.
- All groups of students including disabled students and those with special educational needs, those supported by extra funds (the pupil premium) and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress in their learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although teaching is good overall, some lessons still require improvement. Students do not always have sufficient chances to think more deeply about their work and provide detailed answers. Some lessons lack enough opportunities for students to work on their own and find out things for themselves.
- Work is not always pitched at exactly the right level for all students, in some lessons it is too easy or too hard.
- Students' progress in geography and languages is slower than in other subjects.
- The school has introduced new ways to make sure students develop their literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects. However, these have yet to be checked to ensure they are working well.
- Good ways of helping students to improve their work, planning lessons and making use of the results of tests have been developed in the mathematics and English departments. These have not yet been shared fully across the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons of which four were joint observations with the headteacher and senior staff. They also listened to students read.
- Discussions were held with students, staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at students' books, progress data, safeguarding information and other documentation.
- There were 68 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also scrutinised the results of the school's most recent student and parental surveys and 58 completed questionnaires from school staff.

Inspection team

Ann Ashdown, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Derek Barnes

Additional Inspector

Christine Addison

Additional Inspector

Osama Abdul Rahim

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and for students known to be eligible for free school meals, is above that found nationally.
- An above average proportion of students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action is above average while the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- A small number of students in Year 10 and Year 11 attend vocational courses at other educational providers in Bolton and Bury.
- The school became a specialist language college in 1999 but is now in the process of changing its focus to concentrate on business and enterprise.
- The school's recent GCSE results meet the government's floor standard, which is the minimum level expected for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that all lessons are good and more are outstanding by:
 - allowing students time to think more deeply, reflect on their learning and give detailed answers
 - giving students more opportunities to learn on their own, think for themselves and solve problems
 - pitching work at the right level for all students, particularly higher attainers, so they are fully challenged to achieve their best in all lessons.
- Build upon the current upward trend and further increase the achievement of students by:
 - checking that new strategies for improving students' ability to read, write, communicate and use mathematics in all subjects are working well
 - sharing across all subjects the good practice in feedback to students on how to improve their work, lesson planning and the use of assessment data that has been developed in mathematics and English
 - accelerating students' progress in geography and languages to match that of other subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students come into the school with average standards compared to those found nationally. They make good progress as they move through the school. Results in GCSE examinations have risen markedly over the last four years, particularly in mathematics and English, and are now just above national averages. Parents' responses to the on-line survey (Parent View) and to the school's own surveys show that the vast majority of parents are very satisfied with the progress their children are making.
- The school enters some students for GCSE examinations in Year 10 in mathematics and English. The heads of department in these subjects are well aware of the need to make sure that this does not stop the highest attaining students getting high grades. However, in some lessons, across the school, work is not always pitched at a high enough level to stretch the most able students.
- The school monitors students' progress very carefully, including that of students who attend vocational courses at local colleges. This shows that students in Year 11 are on track to reach their targets this year. Work in students' books confirms the good progress that current students are making in most subjects. However, progress is slower in geography and languages than in other subjects.
- In lessons most students were seen to be enjoying learning, concentrating on the task in hand and achieving well. In a particularly fast paced mathematics lesson students made good progress as they confidently identified different number sequences.
- The school has recently increased its efforts to make sure that students practice their literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects. This was particularly obvious in a very successful 'literacy in science' lesson where students honed their literacy skills by describing accurately different scientific information. However, the school has yet to check that this initiative is working equally well in all lessons and all subjects.
- Teachers and teaching assistants give timely and sharply focused extra help to those who need it. Consequently, disabled students, those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make the same good progress as their peers.
- The attainment of students who are supported by extra funds (the pupil premium) was below that of other students in 2011. However, this gap has narrowed. In 2012, the average point scores of these students, particularly in English, were closer to those of their classmates. Pupil premium funds have been spent wisely on extra staffing to provide one-to-one tuition and extra classes to help students make faster progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved markedly since the last inspection. Much good and some outstanding teaching were seen during this inspection. Most teachers have high expectations of what students can do. Consequently, progress is speeding up and students are getting better results in examinations.
- In the best lessons teachers use a range of attractive resources to gain the interest of their students and the tasks set are varied and demanding. Teachers manage their classes well and relationships are good so students gain in confidence and enjoy learning.
- Some subject departments, particularly mathematics and English, have developed good ways of giving helpful feedback to students and making the best use of test and assessment data to plan lessons. However, this good practice is not yet shared across the whole school.
- In an English lesson, Year 10 students made excellent progress as they confidently and knowledgeably reviewed the prologue to 'Romeo and Juliet'. The teacher made sure that everyone contributed to the lesson and the learning of all students was checked regularly.
- Some lessons still require improvement. In these lessons students spend too long listening to

the teacher and have too few opportunities to work on their own and solve problems for themselves. Students are not given sufficient time to develop their answers and think more deeply about what they are learning. In a few lessons work is not pitched at the right level so some students, particularly higher attaining students, find the work too easy.

- The skills of teaching assistants are well used to give extra help to those students who need it. Disabled students and those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language benefit from working in small groups and receiving high quality teaching, for example in phonics (the sounds that letters make).
- Students work is marked regularly. Most students know the targets they are aiming for and are clear about how to improve their work to achieve them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students, staff and parents all agree that behaviour has improved since the last inspection. Students typically behave well and there are few exclusions from school.
- All students come into school through a single entrance each morning where they are greeted by staff and uniform is checked. This is just one of the positive ways in which the school monitors behaviour and makes sure students are punctual and ready to learn.
- Students are rewarded for good behaviour and are clear about what is expected of them. In lessons students have good attitudes to learning and around the school most behave with consideration and respect for others.
- Students are well informed about how to keep themselves safe, understand the dangers of, for example, abuse of drugs and alcohol, and have a sensible attitude to risk taking. They are aware of different types of bullying, including homophobic bullying, and are confident that any bullying in school will be quickly dealt with.
- Attendance is improving and the proportion of students who are often absent is reducing. Attendance is now above average.
- Assemblies, tutor time and the school's programme of personal, social and health education all contribute to students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students have a clear understanding of right and wrong and are keen to contribute to debates, for example, on issues such as abortion.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has been instrumental in bringing about school improvement. Weaknesses in leadership and in teaching have been tackled successfully. There has been considerable staff change since the last inspection and newly appointed leaders and managers at all levels have brought talent and expertise to the school.
- Teaching is carefully monitored and the performance of staff is well managed and linked to salary progression. Staff are given good quality training to improve their teaching where this is needed.
- The school is well aware of its strengths and weaknesses. Expectations are high. New, clearer and more consistent ways of monitoring students' progress and their behaviour are helping to raise attainment and speed up progress.
- The school is not complacent. It recognises that 'this is not the finished product' and there is still more to do. It has identified that in some subjects, students make slower progress than others and that the best practice in all aspects of teaching and learning need to be shared across the school.
- All groups of students are given good equal opportunities to succeed. Gaps between the achievement of students who are supported by extra funding from the pupil premium and others in the school are now reducing.
- All safeguarding requirements are fully met. Staff are well trained and fully aware of child

protection and risk assessment issues.

- Students have a balanced range of work-related and academic subjects to choose from. The school is now moving from its specialism in languages to focus on business and enterprise but this work is still in the early stages of development. The curriculum is enriched by visits both within the local area and overseas and a wide range of artistic and sporting activities.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are kept well informed about staffing issues, performance management and the quality of teaching. They are supportive, but equally they ask challenging questions of the headteacher. Governors make sure that finances are well managed and pupil premium monies are spent wisely.

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	105256
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	404979

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	937
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judith Twentyman
Headteacher	Phil Hewitt
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2010
Telephone number	01204 333300
Fax number	01204 333307
Email address	info@little-lever.bolton.sch.uk

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