

# Weatherhead High School

Breck Road, Wallasey, Merseyside, CH44 3HS

## Inspection dates

4–5 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b> <b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- Students make outstanding progress whatever their starting point or circumstances and the standards they achieve are significantly above national averages. In Key Stage 3 rates of progress are exceptionally high in mathematics but are not quite as impressive in English.
- Teaching in recent years is outstanding. Every individual student matters and teachers plan and adapt their lessons, effectively checking that each student's needs are met. This enables all students to make outstanding progress. The excellent relationship between staff and students, which is built on mutual respect, inspires confidence and creates an environment in which outstanding learning takes place.
- The behaviour of students in classrooms and around the school is exemplary. They feel happy and safe and talk with a real sense of pride and enthusiasm about what this school offers them. They value and appreciate the support they receive from all staff. Those students whose circumstances might put them at risk are particularly well looked after.
- The school has a very strong sense of community and the successes it has achieved are very much a result of a team effort. Pride in the school is shared by all students, teaching and support staff.
- All leaders and managers are uncompromising in their quest to give all students first class opportunities to learn. As a result, students make outstanding progress. There is a great determination to improve teaching and learning and effective training helps staff to learn from each other in order to further improve their classroom practice.
- Leaders are quick to identify any areas of underperformance and deal with these effectively. This unswerving commitment to improvement leads to exceptional student achievement.
- The leadership specialism is at the heart of the school. There is an excellent focus on developing students' personal skills and the leadership skills of all staff and students.
- Governance is very strong. The chair of governors and her team have a deep knowledge of the school and have played a considerable part in bringing about outstanding improvement.
- The sixth form is good and rapidly improving. Students achieve very well and make a very positive contribution to the life of the school. However students do not make as much progress in A/S separate sciences as they do in the other sixth form subjects.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 47 lessons by 47 different teachers, of which two were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Five groups of students, including those who receive part of their education in several local colleges, met with inspectors. Discussions were also held with staff, including senior and middle leaders and newly qualified staff. A meeting was held with the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors took account of 68 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), and of 59 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors read a range of documents. These included information relating to the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its performance, school improvement plans, students' current progress, policies and records on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

## Inspection team

Anne Seneviratne, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Coleman	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Woodhouse	Additional Inspector
Tudor Griffiths	Additional Inspector
Christine Birchall	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized secondary school with a large sixth form. Students in Year 7–11 are all girls but the sixth form is mixed.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after by the local authority, or from service families is higher than the national average.
- Over 90% of students are White British and the vast majority of students speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students identified with special educational needs and supported through school action is slightly above the national average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly above the national average.
- A small number of students in Key Stage 4 attend courses at local colleges.
- The school has specialist status for media and leadership. It has gained the Investors in People Award, the Media Arts Gold Award, the Sports Leadership Award, and the Cultural Diversity Gold Award and has Healthy School status.
- The school meets the government's floor standard, which is the minimum expected for students' attainment and progress.
- Weatherhead High School converted to become an academy school in January 2012. When its predecessor school, Weatherhead High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.

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

- Ensure that the minor variations in the rates of progress are attended to by:
  - improving Key Stage 3 performance in English to match the very high rate of progress in mathematics
  - improving students' rates of progress in AS level separate sciences.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is outstanding

- Students enter the school with standards which are broadly in line with others nationally, although the proportion of students with higher than average standards is below average. By the end of Year 11 all students make outstanding progress to reach above average standards. The achievement of students in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 4 is significantly above national figures. Although pupils make extremely fast progress in mathematics in Key Stage 3, their progress in English is not quite as swift but by the end of Key Stage 4 progress in English and mathematics is phenomenal.
- The school manages the achievement of all groups of students whose circumstances may put them at risk of underachieving with great care. Consequently, disabled students and those with special educational needs make outstanding progress. Students eligible for the pupil premium make exceptional progress which is a result of carefully targeted and very effective support. Leaders have used pupil premium funding in a range of innovative ways which has resulted in excellent opportunities and outstanding learning for this group of students. The striking success of these groups of students is testament to the school's belief in and commitment to equality of opportunity.
- Standards in the sixth form are above average and progress is good and rapidly improving. There has been a strongly improving trend over the last three years in the vast majority of subject areas with the performance of students taking vocational courses being particularly strong. The progress students make in AS level separate sciences is not as good as in other subjects. Sixth form students receive the same outstanding level of support as they do in the main school and this has significant impact on their achievement.
- In the last three years, improvements in the teaching of literacy skills across the curriculum has had an extremely beneficial impact on students' achievement overall. Students who arrive at the school with weak literacy skills are supported very effectively and, as a result, many make rapid progress, enabling them to achieve well in their studies. Students say the school has helped them to become better readers. Reading takes place regularly during tutor time and is promoted through events such as 'author of the week' and 'reader in residence'.
- Placements at local colleges help students to gain different qualifications, and are having a positive effect on their general attitude to learning. The students themselves speak very positively about their courses and appreciate the school making this alternative provision for them. The programme is well planned, matched to individual students' interests and the quality of provision is checked by a member of the school's staff.
- If students are entered for GCSE examinations early there is a very clear rationale. For example, the most able students take their GCSE mathematics examination at the end of Year 10 and if they achieve their ambitious target grades they take an additional mathematics course in Year 11 in preparation for advanced level study. If not, they continue to work towards achieving their target grade.
- In lessons observed during the inspection, students' achievement was very rarely less than good and in many instances was outstanding. Typically, students pay close attention to the guidance of the teacher and demonstrate a clear enthusiasm for learning. As a result, they are able to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in order to make regular and rapid progress.

### The quality of teaching

### is outstanding

- The quality of teaching in recent years is outstanding in the main school and rarely less than good in the sixth form. The vast majority of teaching observed during the inspection was judged to be good or better with a significant amount being outstanding. Teachers at Weatherhead know their individual students well, and prepare lesson activities that are interesting and challenging. As a result, students respond extremely well, playing a full part in all tasks and

activities.

- There is a very strong relationship between staff and students based on mutual respect. The very positive attitude to learning builds students' confidence and self-esteem and they are encouraged to take risks and challenge themselves. Students value the support they get from teachers and other adults.
- Skilful questioning by teachers is used to check and develop understanding and adjust learning so that all students make exceptional progress. In the best lessons, teachers give thinking time to students before asking for a response which results in more thoughtful answers and wider participation. On the rare occasion when less successful questioning was seen, teachers gave the answers themselves, too soon, rather than allowing the students to work out a solution for themselves.
- Students are given many opportunities to learn from each other. Group work is used very effectively as an important part of many lessons. Excellent examples were seen of students learning to be 'experts' on a particular topic and answering questions posed by the rest of the class.
- There is a strong and regular focus on literacy across all subject areas. Students are very confident when using subject specific words, indeed opportunities are rarely missed to develop the use of new vocabulary with all students.
- Throughout the school, students receive high quality written feedback about their work and in English the marking of students' work is exceptional. The teacher often gives a very personal response to a piece of work. Teachers give clear next steps for improvement and there is evidence in students' books that these are used very well. Students know their targets and, more importantly, what they need to do to reach them.
- The quality of teaching makes a positive contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, particularly in supporting students to reflect, work together and show respect to each other.
- In the lessons which are less than outstanding, often too much time is spent on recapping prior learning at the expense of learning new skills and knowledge. This reduces the amount of progress which students make.
- The quality of teaching which is delivered in the 'Learning Zone' by teachers and support staff enables small groups of students with a range of additional learning needs to make outstanding progress with their studies. Staffing in the Learning Zone is used flexibly and creatively so that individual students enjoy personalised support and guidance.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- Students' behaviour around the school site and in lessons is exemplary and it was clear to inspectors that this is always the case. Students feel safe and happy at school; they enjoy their learning and are keen to do well. They talk with enthusiasm about what this school offers them and they have a sense of pride in their school community.
- All staff ensure that students are valued and are given every opportunity to achieve outstandingly well. Students know and appreciate this and they have total trust in the adults around them.
- Students have a clear understanding and awareness of different types of bullying. They say that bullying is very rare and when it occurs it is dealt with very effectively by the school. They know how to report it and feel that all adults in school will support them.
- School systems for behaviour management and student support are very strong. Leaders' actions to improve students' attendance have led to students rarely missing school. Very few students are excluded from school because leaders and staff successfully help students to quickly improve their behaviour. Behaviour in lessons is guided strongly by very clear expectations and consequences so misbehaviour is very rare. Students value the rewards

system.

- Younger students are pleased with the support offered by sixth form students who help them with literacy and numeracy. These sixth formers are excellent role models and several younger students talked about their aspirations to join the sixth form.

## **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- Outstanding leadership from everyone is at the very heart of this school's success. The headteacher's extremely clear view of a 'culture of excellence' is shared by all members of the wider school community. This is a truly cohesive school where everyone shares the same values. All staff work as one and have the utmost confidence in senior leaders. There was an overwhelmingly positive response in the staff questionnaires with several staff commenting on how much they enjoyed working at Weatherhead.
- Leadership of teaching and learning is outstanding. Training for teachers and other staff is very effective and there are many opportunities for teachers to share their good and outstanding classroom practice. Teachers welcome feedback on their performance and use the opportunity to develop their own classroom practice. Senior leaders have a very accurate grasp of teachers' strengths and areas for development.
- Performance management procedures are used very well to support improvement. There are clear expectations for staff performance, using information about students' achievement, and this is linked to salary progression.
- Pupil premium funding is used very effectively and the exceptional achievement of the students this money supports is clear evidence of its impact. This funding, and other resources, are used to create smaller class sizes and inspectors saw how this helps each student to make outstanding progress in lessons.
- The leadership specialism is used extremely well throughout the whole school. There is a focus on developing leadership skills in every member of the school community. There is a high expectation that staff will take part in their own learning and development and there are many training opportunities available. All those who undertake middle leadership training show improved performance in their departments. Newly qualified teachers are encouraged to take up leadership opportunities. The school has received recognition for its leadership work from the National College.
- Developing leadership skills in students is taken very seriously at Weatherhead and this contributes significantly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are very generous both with their time and money in supporting several organisations including a food bank, a hospital and an orphanage in Kenya. They are involved in volunteering in the wider community including placements at Liverpool museums and the Walker Art Gallery. The school has achieved the Cultural Diversity Gold Award.
- The curriculum provides very well for students' needs and contributes to outstanding achievement. The school has made recent changes to the examination courses that are studied in science that have the potential to improve progress in A/S single sciences because they provide a better match between the GCSE courses and those studied in the sixth form. However, the school knows that teachers must make sure that the current students who are studying single sciences address any gaps in their previous learning.
- Leaders deploy teachers and support staff flexibly to create personalised support and guidance, particularly for students whose circumstances might make them vulnerable. Those who attend local colleges achieve well.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is highly effective, proud of the school and ambitious for its students. It is exceptionally well led and this is instrumental in helping students to achieve exceptionally well. Governors are very well informed about all aspects of school life. They make certain that the pupil premium funding is well spent and that staff salary progression is closely linked to

teachers' skills. They ensure that all statutory responsibilities are met, including making sure that safeguarding policies and procedures are of the highest standards.

## 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>	137815
<b>Local authority</b>	Wirral
<b>Inspection number</b>	403715

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,538
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	415
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	J Owens
<b>Headteacher</b>	N Dymont
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 631 4400
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