

Wilmslow High School

Holly Road, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 1LZ

Inspection dates 30–31 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The drive, passion and determination of the headteacher and her team continue to have a very positive impact on the school's work. Leaders have the expertise and dedication to ensure that the necessary improvements in performance will be tackled effectively. The headteacher has the full support of governors who hold the school rigorously to account.
- While students' achievement is good overall, the most able make outstanding progress.
- Students' behaviour and safety are outstanding. They are proud of their school and show high levels of respect for staff and each other.
- The vast majority of teaching is good with much that is outstanding. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. Almost all lessons include interesting activities and experiences that particularly challenge the most-able students.
- The sixth form is good and highly successful helping students move on to higher education, training or employment. Sixth form students make an excellent contribution to supporting younger students, for example, with reading.
- There is a rich variety of extra-curricular activities, most notably sport, but other activities such as music and drama and residential trips and visits. These enhance the memorable experiences of students and are frequently a catalyst to their success in other parts of the curriculum.
- The school and the headteacher make a significant contribution to school improvement in the locality and collaborate with other schools to share good practice.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The achievement of students for whom the pupil premium provides support and for those supported at school action plus is not as good as that of other students.
- In some lessons, teachers do not plan to meet the differing needs of students within the class. The pace and challenge in lessons is rapid but not all students are able to keep up and thus consolidate their learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 50 lessons, including four joint observations with members of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with five groups of students including the student council and sixth formers. Inspectors also had discussions with senior and middle managers, pastoral and community leaders and three members of the governing body. They also held telephone discussions with a representative of the local authority and two parents.
- Inspectors took account of the 482 parent responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), the school's own surveys and 106 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school at work and looked at students' work during lessons. They looked at a number of documents, including the records of students' attainment and progress, the school's view of its own performance and school improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, lesson monitoring documents, staff training and performance management records. They also looked at records relating to attendance, behaviour, child protection and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Sally Lane, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
James Kidd	Additional Inspector
Jim Bennetts	Additional Inspector
Andrew Henderson	Additional Inspector
Sheila Kaye	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Wilmslow High is a much larger than average-sized secondary school and it has slightly more boys than girls.
- The school has a large, oversubscribed, sixth form.
- The proportion of students eligible for support through the pupil premium is well below the national average. The pupil premium is funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those from service families and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The majority of students are White British with small groups from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below the national average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school has specialist resourced provision for hearing impaired students and for students with autistic spectrum disorders.
- A very small number of students attend alternative provision for part of each week in MYAF (Macclesfield Youth Achievement Foundation), Stockport College and Reaseheath College.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school is part of a soft federation with Knutsford High School and Poynton High School (KPW) to promote opportunities to share good practice. The Wilmslow Education Partnership is a collaboration between all the primary schools in the town and Wilmslow High School.
- The school still functions as a sports specialist school. It acts as the hub for the Macclesfield Schools Sports Partnership. The school has Healthy School, Sportsmark Gold School and School Games Gold, Eco School and International School status.
- The headteacher is a local leader in education, providing support to other schools in the area.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure more teaching is outstanding by making more explicit use of assessment data to plan lessons that even more effectively meet the individual learning needs of all students.
- Accelerate the progress of students supported by the pupil premium and those supported at school action plus by:
 - embedding the recently introduced more strategic approach to supporting these students and evaluating more closely the impact of relevant funding on their progress and attainment
 - ensuring that the existing refined tracking arrangements are used more effectively by all leaders and teachers to provide earlier support and guidance for any students who are relatively underperforming.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- From their above average starting points most students make good progress. The proportion of students gaining five GCSE passes at grade C or above, including English and mathematics remains above the national average despite a dip in results in 2013. Attainment in science is particularly strong for many students.
- Students who have high attainment on entry to the school achieve very well. The proportion making more than expected progress has been above the national average in English and mathematics over the last three years.
- The majority of students achieve well across most subjects in Years 7 to 11. Students develop strong speaking and listening skills, read widely and fluently, and write confidently in different scenarios. Students are equally confident in using their mathematical skills to good effect across the curriculum.
- The very small proportion of students who attend part-time, off-site provision make similarly good progress to their peers, as shown by the regular checks made on their progress, attendance and personal development.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View believe that their children are making good progress.
- Students say they know their targets and what they need to do to achieve these.
- Students who enter the school with literacy and numeracy skills that are below those expected for their age receive effective additional support, including that funded through the Year 7 catch-up funding, that enables them to catch up with their peers quickly. The progress they make is more rapid in English than it is in mathematics.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs, including hearing impaired and those on the autistic spectrum, make good progress overall relative to their starting points. However, those supported at school action plus make less progress.
- Students known to be eligible for the extra funding through the pupil premium do not attain as highly as other students. School leaders have identified this as a priority and are taking steps to improve progress for these students. The relatively wide gap in the attainment of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and other students, in English and mathematics, is now narrowing.
- The school has a sound strategy for early entry GCSE in mathematics, which has promoted achievement across the whole-ability range and has not disadvantaged the most able. The school continues to consider closely the needs of students when making their decisions about early entry.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. The above-average performance continues to be maintained across both Years 12 and 13, so that overall, attainment is above the national average. The ethos of the sixth form enables students to thrive and achieve well. The number of students gaining places at one of the prestigious universities is well above those in most other sixth forms.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and there are examples of outstanding practice. As a result, most students make good progress and achieve well. Teaching is consistently good and often outstanding in the sixth form.
- There are many aspects of teachers' practice that promotes good learning in lessons across all year groups. These include strong subject knowledge, the use of high-quality questioning to challenge students to develop their thinking further, interesting resources, teaching approaches that inspire and interest students and develop their independence and generally an excellent

atmosphere for learning. In a sixth form lesson, for example, students were working on their textiles projects independently with just the right amount of questioning and support to help them, without influencing their own creative decisions and direction. This approach fostered a genuine love of learning for the subject. In another Year 7 badminton lesson, students were challenged to make more progress, which they desperately wanted to do for themselves, because the teacher had placed a particular emphasis on raising their self-esteem.

- Teachers have high expectations and plan lessons to interest learners, but sometimes use a 'one size fits all' approach to tasks that is not sensitive enough to individual students' needs. The challenge can be a little too high for some students in the class, particularly those supported at school action plus, meaning that not all have the support to be able to access the work successfully. When this is the case, teachers do not always adapt activities to meet students' changing needs.
- In the most effective lessons, teachers routinely check students' understanding, intervening when necessary with notable impact on the quality of learning. Occasionally, progress is not checked at the end of lessons in order to inform teachers about what needs to be covered in subsequent lessons.
- There are many examples of good marking, which enables students to know how well they are doing and what to do to improve their work. In some subjects, students are expected to respond to advice given in order to learn from their mistakes, but this is not uniformly the case.
- Teaching assistants are effectively utilised and responsive to the needs of individual students. Overall, they successfully help to accelerate students' progress, including those in the resource provision, who are well integrated into mainstream classes.
- Students have plenty of opportunities to work independently and collaboratively, to discuss, question and express their views. In two different science lessons, for example, students were asked to plan an experiment to develop their investigative skills. All were able to explain their rationale and what limitations there might be.
- Teachers are very conscientious and highly committed. They create good relationships in lessons throughout the school, so that the vast majority of students enjoy and are actively involved in their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students consistently show superb attitudes to learning and a willingness to work independently and collaboratively. Students from different groups cooperate well and are mutually supportive of one another.
- Around the school, students' behaviour is exemplary. Students are polite, courteous, friendly and helpful. Students are proud of the school and fully understand 'The Wilmslow Way' based on 'behaviour, pride and success' all the time. Generally, students show a readiness to learn in lessons with high levels of motivation and self-discipline.
- Students' personal development in the sixth form is outstanding. They are excellent role models and willingly take on a wide range of leadership responsibilities in school, such as, sports leaders, paired readers, peer mentors and primary school helpers.
- Parents indicate overwhelmingly that their children are happy in school and that they feel safe. They also say the school makes sure students are well behaved and deals effectively with any bullying. Students agree saying that school is, in their words, 'anti, anti, anti' bullying. They praise the sixth formers for their help in the 'networkers' room where they can go for help and advice if necessary. Students say they know where they stand because the teachers are consistent in their application of the behaviour policy.
- Most students are fully aware of unsafe situations, including e-safety, gained through specialist teaching in the personal, social and health education programme, as well as in uplifting assemblies.
- The quality of pastoral care and welfare arrangements is a particular strength. Pastoral staff very effectively promote students' well-being. The provision to help them overcome individual barriers

to learning is extensive, highly personalised and meets their individual needs. The new facilities for students with special educational needs and particularly for those who are hearing impaired and those on the autistic spectrum are impressive and will improve on the currently very cramped accommodation.

- Attendance is above average and exclusions are reducing. Effective action with specific students and their families is steadily reducing the already small proportion who have high absence. The school effectively checks on the attendance of those students who benefit from alternative provision.
- The encouragement of sport, particularly through extra-curricular activities, contributes to the whole ethos of the school, and the recognition of success contributes to students' self-esteem and is generally a catalyst in the development of students as well-rounded individuals.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is inspirational. She has a very clear view of how successful the school can be, and exceptional ambition for students' self-esteem, attitudes to learning and academic achievement, which are unanimously shared by governors and all staff.
- Leaders at all levels constantly communicate high expectations. The senior leadership team holds subject leaders rigorously to account, ensuring self-evaluation is robust and actions for improvement are carefully planned. Leaders know the school very well and have already identified the progress of students who are in receipt of the pupil premium and those supported at school action plus as a priority. While their actions did not secure improvements last year, they are already beginning to show improved levels of progress this year. The school recognises that pupil premium funding is not yet used strategically enough across the school.
- There is robust management of teachers' performance through a variety of activities, including lesson observation by both internal and external professionals, and the analysis of students' work. There is a strong, well-managed programme of professional development in place to ensure the on-going improvement in teaching and learning.
- The curriculum is well matched to students' needs, providing a wide range of subjects to meet their wishes and aspirations. There is a strong emphasis on the development of students' literacy, numeracy and communication skills from the time they enter the school. This contributes to their high attainment at Key Stage 4 and subsequent post-16 success. Extra-curricular activities are appreciated by students and the contribution of the school's sports specialism is a particular strength. The curriculum promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Students receive excellent independent careers advice throughout their time in school. This, combined with successful visits, such as to Manchester airport to learn work skills, and university visits, helps students make informed decisions about their future careers to match their aspirations and interests.
- The school communicates well with parents and successfully uses a wide range of strategies to engage them, such as holding meetings in a youth club to help them take an active part in supporting their child's learning. The vast majority would recommend the school to another parent and expressed the view that the school was very well led and managed.
- Partnerships make a valuable contribution to the school's effectiveness. For example, close links with feeder primary schools in the Wilmslow Education Partnership and the KPW federation with local secondary schools allow the sharing of good practice. The local authority believes the school is proactive and forward-looking with a strong capacity to improve and thus their support is very light touch. They rely on the staff in the school for school-to-school support.
- All statutory requirements relating to safeguarding are met both in school and in the off-site provisions.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well informed, and holds all leaders rigorously and, in their words, sometimes 'viciously' to account. Governors are strongly committed to supporting the school and along with senior leaders, are never complacent. Their involvement in the school, along

with detailed information from leaders, ensures that governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement.

- Governors have a close overview of how the school is performing in examinations and ask challenging questions of senior leaders, their ability to do this results from their knowledge and understanding of comparative data. They monitor how the pupil premium funding is spent and are currently questioning the impact of this spending on the progress and attainment of students known to be eligible for free school meals and those supported at school action plus. The governors are regular visitors to the school and through efficient committees they ensure that the performance management of teachers is rigorous, yet fair. They have a clear understanding of how senior leaders respond to any underperformance.

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	111443
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	429614

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	1,992
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	489
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Bennett
Headteacher	Gill Bremner
Date of previous school inspection	5 April 2011
Telephone number	01625 526191
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