

# Ryburn Valley High School

St Peter's Avenue, Sowerby, Sowerby Bridge, HX6 1DF

**Inspection dates** 30 April–1 May 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- Achievement is good. The rate of progress for all groups of students has increased in the last year and is now good.
- Rigorous monitoring of lessons, combined with detailed tracking of students' learning, has led to an improvement in the quality of teaching, which is now good.
- The headteacher and senior staff have driven improvements successfully through focusing relentlessly on raising the quality of teaching.
- The governing body monitors the school's progress rigorously and challenges senior leaders robustly.
- There was a substantial rise in GCSE results in 2012 and further increases are expected this year.
- Sixth form provision is good. Overall, results improved in 2012 across the broad range of qualifications offered. Students, including those with a statement of special educational needs, make good progress.
- Students' good behaviour, very positive attitudes to learning and above average attendance all contribute well to their good progress.
- The school offers a very wide range of courses at Key Stage 4, particularly reflecting its specialism in the media arts. This promotes students' achievement well because they are able to pursue their individual interests.
- The many and varied extra-curricular activities, overseas visits and opportunities to volunteer combine to ensure that provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The standards students reach are broadly average by the end of Year 11.
- A suitably demanding level of challenge for more-able students is not sustained throughout all lessons.
- Attainment in the sixth form is slightly lower than average. The proportion of students reaching the highest grades at A level is below average.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 50 lessons and made shorter visits to several sessions. Two lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors heard a small number of Year 7 students read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, staff, students, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and analysed a range of the school’s documentation. This included: the school’s self-evaluation and development plan; safeguarding records and those relating to students’ behaviour and attendance; data analysing students’ attainment and progress; records of monitoring teaching and students’ learning; and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of 34 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View, and a telephone call from a parent. They also considered 55 questionnaires completed by staff.

## Inspection team

Jane Austin, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Jane Holmes

Additional Inspector

Osama Abdul Rahim

Additional Inspector

Pamela Hemphill

Additional Inspector

Paul Copping

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.*

### Information about this school

- Ryburn Valley High School is much larger than most secondary schools. It serves an area where some secondary schools are selective.
- Most students are White British. A small proportion is from minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest group of these being of Pakistani heritage. The percentage of students who speak English as an additional language is much lower than average and none are at early stages of learning the language.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium, additional government funding allocated for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and those who have a parent in the armed forces, is below average. The school received additional funding to boost the performance of some Year 7 students.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported by school action is well above average. The proportion supported with school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is just above average.
- The sixth form offers tailored programmes for students who have a statement of special educational needs.
- Alternative, off-site provision is made for one student at The Compass Centre.
- The school has a construction academy on-site which operates in partnership with Calderdale College.
- The school meets the government's floor standard, the minimum attainment and progress expected of students at the end of Year 11.
- The school is the first school to receive the Investors in Volunteers award.
- When the school was inspected in February 2012 it was found to require significant improvement. A monitoring inspection in October 2012 judged that the school was making good progress in addressing the areas in need of improvement.

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

- Raise attainment overall, and in the sixth form, by:
  - increasing the proportion of lessons in which learning is outstanding, including through building on the best practice in the school
  - ensuring that higher-attaining students are challenged sufficiently to reach the levels of which they are capable
  - improving teachers' questioning so that students are challenged to think more deeply about their learning
  - increasing the opportunities for students to work independently and take responsibility for their learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- The rate of students' progress has accelerated this year and, overall, is now good in Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form. The school's analysis shows a marked rise, compared with 2012, in the proportion of Year 11 students who have made either the expected rate of progress or more than this since Year 7.
- Lesson observations during the inspection support the school's view that learning in lessons has improved. The school's detailed and robust tracking of students' progress confirms this. Thorough analysis of performance is helping the school to build successfully on the upward trend in GCSE and A-level results evident in the last two years.
- In 2012, attainment by the end of Year 11 was broadly average. Leaders have taken well-considered steps to improve performance in subjects where results were weaker, for example, by focusing departmental management responsibilities more sharply and by restricting entries.
- Leaders can demonstrate that students who are entered early for GCSE mathematics benefit from this.
- While the proportion of sixth form students who gained passes at AS and A-level in 2012 was above average, the proportion who reached the highest grades was below average. There was an increase in those who continued from AS to A-level, although this remained lower than average. Applied courses with a practical focus, for example on childcare, were successful.
- About three quarters of sixth form students went on to higher education while the remainder moved into training or employment. This year more students are expected to move on to higher education.
- Leaders track the performance of groups of students rigorously, taking steps to increase progress where needed. The achievement of those who are disabled and have special educational needs is improving because well-targeted support is sustained. Sixth-form students with statements of special educational needs make good progress in gaining appropriate accreditation and developing independent living skills.
- The achievement of both boys and girls is improving but the attainment of girls is rising more rapidly than that of boys so the gap in performance is not closing. This remains a focus of the school's work.
- In 2012, the GCSE results in English and mathematics for students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding were about a grade below those of their classmates. The school's data show that this gap is closing for current Year 11 students. Some of the funding has been used to provide targeted support, including with revision.
- The school has used some of its pupil premium funding in its drive to improve students' literacy. Successful specialist reading programmes have been established and additional teachers employed to help those, particularly in Year 7, whose learning needs a boost. The recently opened lunchtime reading room, an attractive and comfortable environment, promotes the enjoyment of reading.
- Off-site alternative provision, which is monitored carefully by staff, is proving beneficial for the student who attends.

### The quality of teaching is good

- The school's keen focus on improving the quality of teaching is paying dividends. Observations during the inspection confirm the school's view that a substantial proportion of lessons are regularly good, and sometimes better, both in Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form. The impact of this is evident in the improvements in students' progress.
- Common strengths in lessons are teachers' good subject knowledge and the high expectations they have of students. There are regular opportunities for students to discuss how to move their

work to the next level, as well as to assess their own work and that of their classmates.

- Students' literacy skills are promoted well across the curriculum through, for example, good modelling of subject-specific vocabulary. For example, Year 10 drama students were rapidly able to use terms such as *Brechtian* accurately in discussing features of scenes they were creating for a road safety advertisement.
- In the better lessons, learning is planned well so that ideas and skills are developed progressively and students have good opportunities to practise these. The pace of lessons is brisk with seamless moves from one activity to the next. However, the level of challenge for higher attainers does not always stretch their thinking enough.
- Where lessons are less successful teachers talk for too long, limiting the time students have to spend on tasks. At times, teachers move lessons on too quickly so there are insufficient opportunities for students either to consolidate their understanding or to work independently. Teachers' questioning does not probe students' learning well enough or challenge them to think deeply about what they are learning.
- The quality of marking and feedback varies from subject to subject. Some marking is detailed and shows clearly how students can improve their work, but this is not always the case. In the main, students do not regularly have time to reflect on and respond to teachers' comments.

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

- Students are keen to learn and almost always behave well. They are self-disciplined so little time is wasted in lessons. They collaborate well in pairs and groups, helping one another to complete and improve on tasks. This contributes well to their good progress.
- Relationships between students and with staff are very positive so learning takes place in an atmosphere of mutual respect. In their questionnaire responses, staff are almost all positive about students' behaviour and the way it is managed.
- Students are polite, well-mannered and show consideration for others as they move around the school. They say they like the new system of commendations which focuses on rewarding good behaviour and work. They enjoy being able to select their gifts.
- Students say they feel safe in school and that there is little bullying. They are confident that staff deal quickly and effectively with any incidents that occur. Through personal and social education, students are well informed about the ways in which bullying can take place and how to stay safe. Some are trained as mentors to support those targeted by cyber-bullying, but there has been little call for their skills.
- There is a range of opportunities for students to take on responsibilities, including through organising the sports competitions and quizzes which form part of the house system. Sixth formers regularly help younger students with their reading, as well as volunteering in local primary schools and the community.
- Students are confident that their views are taken into account by senior leaders. The school council is one of the main ways in which students contribute to decision-making.
- Attendance is above average. Trends are tracked closely for all groups and the school responds quickly when issues are identified. The procedures to monitor and support good attendance and behaviour are highly effective: they are led and managed very well.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher has successfully engendered a strong sense of common purpose in driving the school's improvement. Senior leaders, including governors, have been resolute in their determination and focus on improving the quality of teaching to raise students' achievement. The approach to this has been systematic and robust.

- Rigorous regular reviews of the quality of teaching and learning in all subjects have been used well to identify common strengths and weaknesses in practice. A group of staff has drawn on the best practice in the school, making very effective use of the media facilities, to prepare training on areas in need of development. This has been well received by staff.
  - A much more sophisticated and accessible system for tracking students' progress has been developed which is used very well in tandem with the rigorous monitoring of lessons. Senior leaders are much better placed to identify issues in detail for subjects, groups and individuals. Consequently, their evaluation of the school's performance is well informed and accurate.
  - Middle leaders are much more accountable for performance in their areas than was previously the case. They participate in the monitoring activities and meet regularly with senior leaders to drive improvement in their area. For some, recent training has helped to clarify what is expected of them.
  - Performance management accurately reflects the skills of teachers and is being used to good effect to ensure that staff strengths are drawn on and responsibilities are equitably distributed.
  - The curriculum contributes well to students' good progress. The school offers a broad range of academic and vocational courses at Key Stage 4, enhanced by opportunities in the media arts linked to the school's specialism. The on-site construction academy further extends the offer. No restrictions are placed on combinations of subjects so every student follows an individually tailored programme. However, a strong emphasis is placed on advice and guidance for students to ensure that choices do not restrict their future options.
  - In the sixth form, students choose from a good range of academic subjects as well as some vocational courses at various levels. The school's strong emphasis and success in developing volunteering as an integral part of sixth-form learning has been recognised in the recent award, the first to a school, of Investors in Volunteers. The provision for students with statements of special educational needs matches their individual requirements well.
  - Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Tutorial and house activities contribute to this, as does the extensive range of extra-curricular clubs. As well as many media-related activities, there is a keen emphasis on service, for example in visits to Uganda, India and Ethiopia where students have contributed to local community projects.
  - The local authority has helped the school through periodic reviews of progress, support at some governing body meetings and liaison with the school's external professional partner. In addition, through the cluster of local secondary schools, the local authority linked officer has contributed to quality assurance.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - The governing body provides keen challenge as well as considerable support to the school. Governors are very well informed about the school's performance. Through the breadth of pertinent skills they bring to their role and through training, governors are well placed to ask searching questions about students' achievement. This includes monitoring the impact of pupil premium funding on students' progress.
    - The governing body's committee structure has been aligned to the school's development plan and progress with this is checked regularly. Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching through regular reports on the outcomes of quality assurance. The governing body is appropriately involved in decisions about teachers' performance management and has been closely involved in the development of a new appraisal process linked to the *Teachers' Standards*.
    - The governing body ensures that the school meets all requirements for safeguarding students. They also ensure that discrimination, in all its forms, is not tolerated.
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## 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>	107565
<b>Local authority</b>	Calderdale
<b>Inspection number</b>	399653

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,430
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	220
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Melvyn Cross
<b>Headteacher</b>	Honor Byford
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 February 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01422 832070
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