

Prenton High School for Girls

Hesketh Avenue, Rock Ferry, Birkenhead, Merseyside, CH42 6RR

Inspection dates

27–28 March 2014

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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students achieve well in English and mathematics. A large majority achieve standards slightly above those achieved by most students nationally.
- A large majority of students make good progress as they move through the school. Most students who begin to fall behind are supported in catching up so they progress well, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is good with a small minority outstanding. Students concentrate closely on their learning so they develop their understanding and learn new skills effectively.
- Students who need additional help with their reading make outstanding progress in literacy and English, as a result of exceptionally well-planned teaching and support.
- Students behave well in lessons and show respect and consideration to others when moving around the school. Students say they feel safe and describe the school as 'one big family'.
- Leaders, managers and governors ensure that teaching is good and are taking steps to ensure teaching improves further so more students attain even higher standards.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The most able students and those supported by pupil premium funding do not make as much progress as other groups in the school.
- Not all teachers plan effectively, or explain what students need to learn clearly enough, so students can make progress from their different starting points.
- Not all middle leaders are effective in improving teaching in their subject.
- The rates of students' progress are slower in science than in English and mathematics and teaching is improving less rapidly.
- Targets set for students, particularly in mathematics, do not always motivate students to strive to achieve their best.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 35 lessons or parts of lessons and 36 staff, including three observed jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and a governor, leaders of teaching, assessment, attendance and behaviour and groups of students. They also talked with students in lessons about their work and informally outside and around school.
- Inspectors looked closely at a range of documents, including the school’s assessment of what was working well and what needed to improve, the school’s plans for actions they need to take to improve the school further, the assessments of students’ progress, records of the monitoring of teaching, attendance and behaviour, and arrangements to keep students safe in school.
- The team took account of the school’s recent surveys of the views of parents, staff and students and responses to the staff questionnaire given out during the inspection. There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), for inspectors to take these views into account.

Inspection team

Nell Banfield, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Linda Magrath	Additional Inspector
Fiona Burke-Jackson	Additional Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average size secondary school.
- The proportion of students eligible for pupil premium funding is above that found nationally. This is additional funding for those students known to be eligible for free school meals, for students who are looked after by the local authority and for the children of service families.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is similar to that found nationally.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage and a small proportion of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard which is the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The current headteacher was appointed in September 2013.
- Prenton High converted to an academy in August 2011. At that time, the predecessor school was judged to be outstanding.
- The school holds a number of awards, including the Eco Schools Bronze Award, the Royal Aeronautical Society Centennial Scholarship Award, the Wirral Youth Heroes Award and is the UK Robotics Champions, and is linked with Oxford University, Imperial College London and with MENSA.
- A very small number of students follow alternative courses away from the school site at Shaftesbury Youth Club and the Joseph Paxton Campus.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency in the quality of teaching so more students, including the most able, make rapid progress, particularly in science, by :
 - questioning students more closely so they have to think hard to justify their views and explain their ideas in detail, or add additional detail to the views and ideas of others
 - using assessments of students' work, planning the steps that students need to take to strengthen their understanding and knowledge
 - feeding information back regularly to students, not only about what they have done well but also suggesting what they need to practise or include in their work, in order to reach higher levels.
- Improve the consistency in the quality of leadership so all leaders promote high quality learning in their subjects by:
 - setting more challenging targets for students to work towards, especially in mathematics, particularly for the most able and those supported by pupil premium funding, so students make faster progress in their learning
 - subject leaders establishing a shared and common understanding of what teachers do that leads to students making rapid progress, so teachers can incorporate these activities into their teaching.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards reached by students at the end of Year 11, particularly in English, have been consistently above average for the last three years, although they declined slightly in 2013. The school's figures for 2014 indicate the current Year 11 are set to reach standards in English and mathematics above those attained in 2012.
- Students enter the school at levels similar to those of most students nationally. From these starting points, the large majority make good progress in most subjects, including English and mathematics. Progress is slower in science, particularly for the most able students. Steps have been taken to improve teaching in science assessments indicate more students, including the most able, are making the progress expected of them.
- In 2013, the gap between the performance of students supported by the pupil premium funding and most students in the school widened. Those students known to be eligible for free school meals achieved around two-thirds of a GCSE grade lower than other students in the school in English and in mathematics. Pupil premium funding is now used more effectively to identify more quickly those students who are falling behind and to promptly and regularly provide them with additional skilled teaching so they make faster progress.
- The most able students reached high standards in some subjects, but fewer reached high standards in mathematics and science in 2013. The school's improved assessment system now clearly identify those most-able students who are already achieving high grades in their work and practice examinations, and the few who are working below the standards of which they are capable. This means the school can provide prompt and rapid support to accelerate progress. As a result, more students, including the most able students, are now better placed to make faster progress than most students nationally.
- The progress made by disabled students and those with special educational needs has improved as a result of skilled teaching and well-organised additional literacy support, and is now outstanding.
- The very small minority of students from minority ethnic backgrounds make progress similar to, and sometimes better than, that made by most students in the school. This is evidence of the school's strong commitment to all students having an equal opportunity to succeed.
- The school enters some students early for English and mathematics GCSE examinations if they are ready to achieve well. Many go on to exceed their grades even further.
- The small number of students who follow courses away from the school site improve their attendance and make good progress, which enables them to take GCSE and vocational examinations that prepare them well for their future.

The quality of teaching is good

- Scrutiny of students' work in their books, examination results and the school's assessments of progress over time, indicate teaching is good.
- Teachers know students well and most teachers ask well-chosen questions so the most able students apply what they are learning to different situations and those less confident are made to think carefully, so they are clear about what they are learning. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson, the teacher asked well-planned questions which gradually became more difficult and made sure all students showed their answers in large print at the same time. The teacher saw clearly when different students began to make errors, and adjusted the teaching accordingly. As a result, students made excellent progress from their starting points. However, not all teachers plan questions carefully so they are clearly understood, nor do they ask students to explain their answers. When this happens, students become confused and unsure about what they are learning.
- Most teachers introduce lessons by explaining clearly what students are to learn and what they

need to do so they reach the highest level in their learning. The majority of teachers plan lessons well so students are taken steadily through the stages in learning so they can reach the highest levels. This means students are well motivated and well supported in making rapid progress. However, some planning does not take enough notice of the levels students have reached in their learning, in order to set work that deepens their understanding and increases their knowledge.

- Teachers mark students' assessments regularly and a large majority note what students have done well. However, not all teachers indicate explicitly what students need to practise nor what they need to include in their work in order to progress to the next level. Students are not generally required to respond to teachers' comments and opportunities are lost for students to improve sections of their work or add additional detail.
- Students in Year 7 who need to improve their reading are given very effective, regular and systematic support from staff, using materials paid for by the Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium funding. Teachers have high expectations of what the students can achieve in literacy and in their English lessons and writing is of a high standard as a result.
- Teaching assistants have been allocated to some subject departments and teachers speak highly of their support in developing very suitable methods for teaching students who work more slowly than others, or who lack confidence.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. The large majority of students behave well in lessons and around the school, and consider others when moving between lessons in the narrow corridors. Students arrive promptly to lessons and are usually keen to learn. They are proud of their uniform and take care of their classrooms and social areas.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say they feel safe and are confident that they can go to any adult for support if they are upset or worried about anything. The school's curriculum, assemblies and specially organised events mean that students are clear about the different forms that bullying can take, including how mobile phones can be misused. They know how to keep themselves safe when using social networks.
- When working in pairs or small groups, they cooperate well and support each other in listening and sharing everyone's ideas. A very small minority of students occasionally show less respect for adults than that shown by the majority of students.
- The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Students celebrate different religious festivals by, for example, at lunchtime sampling dishes linked to a festival. They are aware of current events and conflicts around the world, such as in Korea, they learn how to manage their finances during enterprise days and how to express their views and ideas through debates and the school council. Students understand how hurtful derogatory language can be and are careful not to use casual terms that could offend others.
- Attendance is above average and the school has reduced the number of students who are persistently absent.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, with the support of senior and middle leaders and governors, is successfully tackling the slight decline in results in 2013, the lower attainment of the most able students and the increased gap in attainment between students supported by pupil premium funding and other students. Actions are being taken to improve the quality of teaching, accuracy of assessment and analysis of students' progress.
- Examination results, the school's assessments, progress in lessons and in students' work indicate students' achievement has begun to improve, particularly in English and mathematics. Progress has been slower to improve in science.

- The leadership of teaching is good. A comprehensive and purposeful programme of training for teachers has resulted in students making better progress. The school has established a Teaching Community, which is providing a forum for discussion and opportunities for teachers to demonstrate and share the impact of the training.
- The new software to analyse behaviour in the school means that leaders can target individual students and support them more closely so their attendance and behaviour improve. The checks made on the quality of teaching and the analysis of the rigorous assessments of students' progress by most subject leaders, now enable them to lead their subject team in systematically sharing the strengths in each department and providing support where teaching is not yet good, so that it improves rapidly. However, the leadership of teaching by subject leaders is not yet consistently good across the school, thus not all teaching and progress is improving rapidly enough. In mathematics, some students have targets which are lower than the levels the students are currently working at, limiting their aspirations. In science, teaching is improving but not rapidly enough to ensure all groups of students make the progress of which they are capable.
- Responses of parents to the school's survey indicate they are very positive about the school and feel their daughter is safe and making good progress. The vast majority of staff agree the school is supporting students well and several expressed great pride in being a member of staff. Any concerns from either the questionnaire were responded to promptly and constructively by senior leaders.
- Senior and middle leaders and governors recognise good performance by teachers and leaders. The school's rigorous arrangements to manage the performance of staff include targets and pay awards which relate to students' progress and standards.
- The curriculum meets the needs of students well. Some have the opportunity to take specific subjects that will enable them to move on to advanced levels of study after they leave the school. Others select from a broad range of subject choices in Year 9. School leaders are keeping the curriculum under review to ensure that appropriate and balanced curricular choices are available to all students. An excellent range of additional enrichment activities are enjoyed by students.
- The local authority has supported the school with a programme of training to improve the quality of teaching and works closely with the school to support necessary improvements.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet all current statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have undertaken training to improve their understanding of the school's data and the Chair of the Governing Body meets regularly with the headteacher to discuss the analysis of the school's strengths and what still needs to improve. This analysis is then shared with all members of the governing body. As a result, governors are well placed to challenge leaders. They are very clear which groups of students did not achieve as well as others in 2013 and know the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding has been spent more wisely since then. However, they are not fully aware of the impact of the funding currently, and are seeking this information to ensure students are making sufficient progress to achieve their targets in 2014. Governors spend time in lessons, know the strengths in teaching, where improvement is required and are supporting the headteacher and senior leaders in improving teaching so more teaching is consistently good. Governors are fully supportive of the headteacher and deputy headteacher in rewarding good and improved teaching linked with students' progress and have supported the implementation of the new systems for managing teachers' performance. Financial management is robust.

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	137130
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	440912

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	741
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	J Roper
Headteacher	Lisa Ayling
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2011
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