

Central Lancaster High School

Crag Road, Lancaster, Lancashire, LA1 3LS

Inspection dates 21–22 November 2012

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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Students' results at the end of Year 11, in a number of subjects, are well above average.
- The quality of teaching in the large majority of lessons is usually good, with examples of outstanding practice. Teachers regularly mark students' work and the best marking provides clear guidance to students about what they need to do to improve.
- The performing and visual arts subjects make a significant contribution to the results achieved by students in the school.
- Students' behaviour is exemplary both in lessons and around the school. They have very positive attitudes to learning and their attendance is above average.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, share a common purpose. They are committed to continual improvement and providing a school where students strive to achieve their best. Governors provide a good balance between supporting the school and holding leaders and managers to account for the results students achieve.
- The newly opened sixth form, provided in partnership with three other schools, offers a wide range of academic and vocational courses which prepares students well for the next stage. Teaching in the sixth form centre at the school is consistently good.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teaching, particularly in the main school, still requires further improvement.
- When evaluating students' achievement, leaders and managers place more emphasis on examination results and not enough on the progress groups of students make, for example in English.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with half a day’s notice.
- Inspectors took into account the views expressed in the 24 responses to the on-line Parent View survey.
- The inspection team also took into account the 53 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed 45 part-lessons taught by 45 different teachers and made shorter visits to some lessons as part of a ‘learning walk’. Joint observations of lessons were also carried out in partnership with two senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of Governors, the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, groups of teachers and a range of students of differing ages.
- Students’ work was examined as were the school’s key policies, minutes of governing body meetings, the school’s self-evaluation and progress plan. Information provided by the school showing students’ progress was also analysed. The school’s website provided a comprehensive source of information.

Inspection team

Charles Lowry, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Denah Jones

Additional Inspector

Naomi Taylor

Additional Inspector

Wendy Bradford

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Central Lancaster High is a smaller than average 11 to 18 school located in the Ridge area of east Lancaster.
- The school has a comprehensive intake and operates within the local selective school system.
- Since September 2011, the school has been working in partnership with three other local schools providing post-16 education in the Lancaster area.
- The school population is predominantly of White British heritage with few students from other backgrounds or who are at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of students entitled to a free school meal and for which the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium is above average.
- The number of students who require extra help including those supported at school action, school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- A small number of students attend alternative providers to study for qualifications in motor vehicle engineering and hairdressing.
- The school has a specialism in visual and performing arts.
- Central Lancaster High is a national support school and the headteacher is a national leader of education. This means that the headteacher and his colleagues provide support and guidance for other schools and, in particular, those schools in challenging circumstances.
- The school is the holder of a number of awards including the Healthy Schools, the International Schools and Eco-Schools awards.
- The school is also a national teaching school, a gifted and talented lead school and a Fairtrade School.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is all at least good with much that is outstanding by:
 - always planning lessons that meet the needs of all students
 - giving students even more opportunities to work independently and find things out for themselves
 - ensuring that all marking matches the best practice in the school.
- Improve the school's evaluation of students' achievement by:
 - making sure that leaders and managers focus on students' progress as well as students' examination results
 - investigating rigorously the effectiveness of the school's early entry policy for GCSE examinations and the impact it is having on students' progress, for example in English.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Examination results at the end of Year 11 have been on an upward trend for the last three years and in 2012 most students left the main school with at least five A* to C grades at GCSE. This is a direct result of good quality teaching in most subjects. Standards reached by students in the performing and visual arts are extremely high.
- For two of the last three years, students' performance in mathematics was below average. However, robust action taken by senior leaders to improve the quality of teaching in this subject has meant that students now make progress which compares favourably with the national figure.
- Currently, the quality of teaching in English is consistently good. However, students' progress over time in this subject has been variable. The most able make the progress expected of them but some middle ability students underperform. The school has yet to fully analyse the reasons for this.
- The school successfully meets the needs of those students for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium and those who need extra help. Teaching is tailored to meet their learning needs in most lessons. As a result of exceptional care, guidance and support, the gap between the performances of these students, as measured by their average points scores at GCSE, and that of their peers in the school is smaller than that found nationally and is continuing to close. As one parent commented, 'the school sees potential in every child and works hard to help them succeed.'
- Teachers are able to identify underperformance quickly. From the time students enter the school they are set targets for their academic performance and progress against these targets is monitored half-termly. Teachers identify those students who are off track and then put in place appropriate additional help.
- In the new sixth form students' achievement in lessons is good as a result of good quality teaching.
- Most parents who responded to the Parent View survey agreed that their child is making good progress. Inspection evidence would support this.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and as a result most students make good progress and achieve well.
- The quality of teaching in mathematics is much better than it was at the previous inspection. Consequently, achievement in mathematics is improving and overcoming a legacy of underperformance.
- Where teaching is good or outstanding, students are eager to learn and actively engaged. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to use questioning expertly to deepen students' understanding. Activities meet the needs of all learners and students are given opportunities to work independently or in groups exploring ideas, finding out things for themselves and being creative. In one outstanding Year 8 dance lesson, students choreographed a dance routine using ideas from each member of the group. The quality of the subsequent and highly polished, complex routine demonstrated outstanding progress.
- Students reflect regularly on the quality of their work. Inspectors saw numerous examples of students giving each other constructive feedback making suggestions as to how a piece of work could be improved.
- Students' work is marked regularly. Where marking is of high quality teachers' comments give students clear direction about improvements. The school's focus on literacy is also evident with teachers emphasising the use of key subject words and correct spelling.
- Teaching in a small minority of lessons requires improvement. In these lessons a 'one size fits

all' approach is adopted with all students doing the same activity, so for some students the activity is too challenging and for others not challenging enough. Teachers talk for too long, limiting opportunities for students to work independently and discover things for themselves. Occasionally, teachers' comments on students' work do not provide enough information about what the student needs to do to improve.

- Most parents who responded to the on-line Parent View survey feel that their child is well taught and inspectors would agree.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students are invariably courteous and polite and are extremely proud of their school. This is testament to the outstanding care and guidance provided by all members of staff.
- Students' attitudes to learning are exemplary. The school's 'Learning to Learn' course for students in Years 7 and 8 prepares them well for the rigours of academic study and develops their speaking, listening, team working and research skills.
- Disruptive behaviour is exceptionally rare. In those few lessons where students have to listen for long periods they are patient and engage appropriately with the teacher, answering questions and listening intently.
- The school is an orderly and calm place for learning where, as one student put it, 'learning is fun'. It has a robust policy for rewards and sanctions which is consistently applied. Analysis of the school's records of behaviour shows the positive impact of this policy.
- The students have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying including cyber and prejudice based bullying but are keen to point out that behaviour of this type is extremely rare. However, students agreed that should it occur they would know who to approach for help and they are confident that it would be dealt with effectively. Consequently, students say they feel safe in school.
- Attendance is above average and continues to improve. The school places great importance on good attendance and rewards those students who come to school regularly and on time. Students with weak records of attendance are identified before they enter Year 7. The school's attendance officer then works with these students and their families to try and remove any barriers to regular attendance and enable these students to come to school.
- The school's positive, friendly and welcoming atmosphere helps support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school describes itself as 'multi-faith' and a room has been set aside for use by students for prayer and reflection. Activities such as 'Diversity Week' and the rich extra-curricular programme also make a significant contribution to this aspect of students' development.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is a determined and passionate individual who has united the school community behind his vision, expressed in the school's prospectus of 'inspiring success'.
- The school's view of students' achievement is sometimes too generous. This is because when performance is analysed too much emphasis is placed on students' examination results and not enough on their progress. This limits the school's view of how well students have actually done. For example, the performance of students who take GCSE English early has not been fully evaluated.
- Performance management is rigorous. Targets for improvement ensure that teachers are held to account for the quality of their teaching and students' results. Pay progression is linked to the successful achievement of these targets.
- The school has developed strong links with its new sixth form partners. Management systems to monitor and evaluate the work of the new sixth form are only just being developed and it is too early to assess their impact.

- The local authority views the school as highly effective and has linked it with other schools so that it can share its good practice.
- The curriculum in the main school and sixth form is broad and balanced. It provides a good range of opportunities, meets the needs of the students and prepares them well for the next stage of their lives. The small number of students attending alternative providers to study for qualifications in motor vehicle engineering and hairdressing have their needs effectively met.
- The school has used the additional pupil premium funding it received in 2012 well. For example, increasing staffing in English and mathematics to reduce class sizes and provide greater opportunities for students to receive individualised support. The impact has been that the gap between the results achieved by students in receipt of the pupil premium and their peers in the school is closing at a faster rate than is found nationally.
- The school has addressed all of the areas for improvement identified at its previous inspection and so continues to demonstrate strong capacity for even further development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is united behind the headteacher’s vision for the school. Governors have effectively supported the school in establishing the new sixth form and extending educational opportunities for students both in the school and wider community. They support the headteacher in making sure that performance management of teachers is rigorous. They are also involved in decisions on salary progression and promotion; linking both to the quality of teaching. They have equally high standards for the performance management of the headteacher. Minutes of governing body meetings provide evidence that the governors not only support the headteacher and senior leadership but also hold them to account. They rigorously monitor the additional funding the school receives through the pupil premium and they are aware of the positive impact this funding is having on results. They have ensured that all safeguarding and child protection policies and practice meet requirements.

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	119770
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	400203

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	769
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	62
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	William Deller
Headteacher	Jon Wright
Date of previous school inspection	22 October 2008
Telephone number	01524 32636
Fax number	01524 849586
Email address	clhs@lancasterhigh.lancs.sch.uk

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