

The Byrchall High School

Warrington Road, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Wigan, Lancashire WN4 9PQ

Inspection dates

6–7 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality and impact of leadership are too mixed. Leaders have an accurate understanding of what is required to improve the school, but do not consistently take action to secure these changes.
- Governance requires strengthening. It is not fully effective in supporting and challenging school leaders to make the improvements required.
- Despite recent improvements, leadership requires strengthening in several subjects, particularly for geography, history and science.
- The implementation and impact of the curriculum require strengthening. Pupils are not consistently provided with opportunities to learn at greater depth.
- The leadership of teaching requires further strengthening. The impact of training is not fully reviewed. As a result, the response to changes is inconsistent and requires improvement.
- Leaders' use of the funding provided for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND has not fully focused on improving progress until recently. As a result, further improvement is required to ensure that these pupils routinely make good progress.
- Teachers do not consistently use assessment information to plan work that challenges pupils, especially the most able pupils.
- The quality of teaching across departments varies. It is weakest in geography, history and science. Recent actions and systems to secure consistently effective teaching have improved teaching, including in these subjects, but it is not consistently good.
- Despite recent improvements, the progress which pupils make requires improvement in several subjects, especially for the disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND and the most able.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, including subject leaders, have been effective in embedding good teaching and pupils' progress across a number of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- The headteacher and other senior leaders demonstrate the capacity to further improve the standard of education provided.
- Pupils say the school is a happy and safe place. They respect themselves and others. Pupils' behaviour and attendance, including those who are disadvantaged or with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are good.
- Pupils have high standards of oracy. They speak with confidence and fluency.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - evaluating the impact of actions to improve the quality of teaching and using the findings to plan next steps
 - providing training to ensure consistency in the leadership of subjects, especially in geography, history and science
 - making more effective use of the extra funding provided for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND so that they make good progress
 - strengthening the curriculum, so that pupils are consistently provided with opportunities to learn at greater depth
 - supporting governors to challenge school leaders to make the improvements required to secure a good quality of education.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, especially in geography, history and science, by ensuring that teachers consistently set work which stretches pupils' thinking, knowledge and skills.
- Raise progress by ensuring that pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, those with SEND, and the most able, receive the support and challenge needed.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to see how this aspect of leadership and management can be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The impact of leadership at the school is mixed, so it is not fully effective. There are strengths, including at senior leadership level, but there are currently too many aspects where leadership requires improvement. As a result, the quality of teaching and the progress which pupils make are not consistently good.
- Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the challenges the school faces in order to further improve the standard of education which it provides. They demonstrate the capacity to make the improvements necessary. For example, the success of leaders' actions is evident in securing good attendance for disadvantaged pupils. This was a weakness at the last inspection. This improvement in attendance extends to many of the pupils who join the school with previously weak attendance records. Senior leaders' actions to secure good subject leadership in English and mathematics have been effective and have established a firm foundation for good learning and progress in these subjects.
- Senior leaders have sharpened their focus on improving the quality of teaching, so that pupils in all subjects learn effectively. Senior leadership has been restructured to provide additional impetus to this aspect. A training programme which has been put into place has been received positively by staff. They feel that it is having a positive impact on improving their skills and pupils' learning. However, leaders have not been fully effective in evaluating the impact of the training on improving the quality of teaching. Leaders do not use the findings to plan next steps. Therefore, changes are not fully embedded, so the quality of teaching varies between subjects. As a result, although pupils are now making better progress overall, further work is required from leaders to secure consistently good teaching.
- The effectiveness of subject leadership is mixed. Where it is strongest, such as in English and mathematics, subject leaders accurately monitor pupils' learning in the departments for which they are responsible. As a result, these leaders have an accurate grasp of the quality of teaching in their departments. They are influential in securing further improvements and supporting pupils' good progress. The effective leadership of modern foreign languages is also having a positive impact on pupils' engagement and success in that subject. However, despite some strengthening of weaker subject leadership, such as history, geography and science, additional training and support are required to ensure that leadership of these subjects is fully effective.
- Leaders at all levels have acted to improve the curriculum. Although this has led to strengthening the curriculum, the impact of change has not been fully effective. In key stage 3, pupils study a range of subjects, including arts, technology and academic subjects. They prosper and make good progress in those areas where the curriculum provides new, challenging and exciting opportunities for learning, such as in art, drama and English. At other times, where the curriculum does not match these strengths, such as in science and the humanities, pupils do not learn so effectively and eagerly. As a result, they do not make the good progress seen elsewhere.
- In key stage 4 more pupils follow courses which are planned to match their needs and interests than was the case previously. For example, in key stage 4 pupils benefit from

the increased opportunities to follow the English Baccalaureate suite of academic subjects. These courses match these pupils' requirements and provide a positive route to next steps in education or training for them. However, the implementation of this curriculum is not fully consistent. Strengths are obvious and pupils enjoy a rich and rewarding curriculum in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages, so they learn well. The most able pupils who follow these courses are challenged to think deeply, so they make good progress. However, the curriculum is less effective in geography, history and science. In these subjects the strengths seen elsewhere are less consistent and the curriculum does not include enough detail and opportunity to learn with fluency and at greater depth. This restricts pupils' progress, including for the most able pupils.

- Leaders take the time to plan a wide range of extra-curricular activities for pupils. They ensure equal opportunity for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND to fully participate and benefit from these activities, which broaden pupils' experience and expertise. The programme of activities develops pupils' wider academic, cultural, artistic and sporting interests. Pupils respond effectively to supporting charities and recognise their role in helping others. They recognise the importance of equality and their role in supporting and strengthening fundamental British values.
- The careers guidance programme is effective. Pupils say that they value the independent advice and guidance that they receive. As a result, almost all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, move on to further education or training.
- The actions taken to support those with lower than average levels of literacy and numeracy to catch up by the end of Year 7 are effective.
- Leadership of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils has recently been reviewed. Although the use of funding is currently not fully effective there has been success in some important aspects where there had been little significant improvement in the past. Disadvantaged pupils were vulnerable to weak attendance and exclusion. Leaders have introduced effective systems to monitor and support the good attendance and conduct of these pupils. As a result, disadvantaged pupils now attend school regularly and are less likely to be excluded from school than previously. Disadvantaged pupils benefit from their good attitudes to learning, but the challenge provided by the work which they are set varies. As a result, although disadvantaged pupils make better progress overall than previously, it is not consistently strong across subjects.
- The leadership of pupils with SEND is not fully effective. These pupils' pastoral needs, including those with an education, health and care plan (EHC plan) are met well. Most of these pupils attend regularly, are supported sensitively to ensure that they feel secure at school and benefit from good conduct. Staff work closely with the pupils' primary schools to ensure that these pupils' pastoral and care requirements are known and supported well by staff when they enter Year 7. However, leadership has not given enough attention to improving these pupils' progress. Leaders have not been fully effective in monitoring and acting to improve the progress which these pupils make. As a result, although some pupils with SEND make good progress in some subjects, their progress overall requires improvement.

Governance of the school

- Governance is not fully effective. Governors' efforts to strengthen their capacity to drive improvements at the school in recent years, through new appointments and training, have had limited impact to date. Governors' work to provide the support and challenge required to embed good teaching and pupils' good progress has had mixed success.
- Governors recognise the school's current strengths, weaknesses and the priorities for further improvement. They understand their responsibility to ensure that current areas of weakness are addressed. Success can be seen in the recently strengthened leadership of modern foreign languages and pupils' improved progress in that subject. However, despite a sharper focus on the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND recently, governors have not effectively supported the good progress of these pupils over time.
- Governors take their responsibilities seriously. They take the time to promote the school's values. Governors remind staff that the pupils deserve the broadest and best educational experience and that it is their purpose to provide this.
- Governors' experience of financial management enables them to support this aspect of school leadership effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders are aware of the risks which pupils' face, including those which are present in pockets of the local community. Staff are trained in identifying potential risks to pupils. These include risks of child sexual exploitation, peer-on-peer abuse, and radicalisation. Staff take the time to know pupils well, so provide for their safety and well-being effectively.
- Leaders maintain good-quality safeguarding records. They have systematic procedures for checking the backgrounds of staff when they are appointed.
- School leaders' work with external agencies and parents and carers is effective. They act swiftly when required to secure pupils' safety and well-being. Referrals are made to and followed-up with external agencies as appropriate.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the risks which might affect them and how to keep safe, including when online. They know to whom they should report concerns and how to do this.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies across subjects. Where there is effective practice, such as in English, mathematics, art and drama, pupils learn well. In fact, in these subjects the quality of teaching is further improving, because subject leaders provide the expectation and support for this to be the case. The quality of teaching has improved this year in modern foreign languages and is good. In geography, history and science, despite some recent improvement, teaching does not meet the good standards seen elsewhere. Similarly, in computing and religious education the quality of teaching varies

and is not consistently good

- In the weaker subjects, teachers set tasks which do not challenge pupils sufficiently, especially the most able pupils. In these cases, teachers do not use the assessment information available about pupils' learning to set work which matches their needs. As a result, these pupils are not provided with opportunities to think deeply enough and respond with detail, creativity and fluency. Conversely, in other cases, such as mathematics, the most able pupils are making good progress. They welcome and benefit from the opportunities provided to grapple with complex ideas and activities.
- Most teachers have good subject knowledge. They use this to engage pupils in challenging and interesting activities; for example, in art and English pupils learn well. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning enhance their progress in these cases, because they explore and experiment with new ideas confidently. They are not afraid to try new ways of writing, painting or expressing themselves, even if their initial attempts do not go to plan. However, these strengths are less evident where teaching is weaker. In these cases, such as in science, teachers seldom use their subject expertise to enthuse pupils or apply their learning creatively. This restricts pupils' learning.
- Senior leaders see the development of pupils' effective communication skills as pivotal to their success. Leaders' expectation that teachers support the good development of pupils' speaking skills is effective. As a result, pupils are provided with opportunities to speak regularly and they do so with fluency and confidence. Pupils are inquisitive about the topics which they study and use their strong oracy skills to ask challenging questions and participate in discussions about their learning. This further strengthens their speaking skills. The actions taken to support those with lower than average levels of literacy and numeracy to catch up by the end of Year 7 are effective.
- Additional training has not been effective in ensuring that teaching for pupils with SEND is consistently good. Training has improved teachers' skills in supporting these pupils and improving their attitudes to learning. However, teachers do not routinely use the information provided about the academic needs of these pupils effectively to set work which meets their needs, and this restricts their progress.
- Pupils and parents generally say that they are satisfied with the homework that pupils are set. It is set regularly and at the correct level.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and courteous. They are polite and wear their uniform with pride. They demonstrate positive and aspirational attitudes about themselves, others, and their expectation of their futures. Inspectors noted pupils' skill and maturity when speaking about their experience in and views of the school.
- Pupils clearly enjoy and benefit from their positive interactions with one another and adults. Pupils say that they are happy at school. This is evident at breaktimes and lunchtimes, where pupils mix, play and pursue their own interests. The positive relationships extend to lessons, where pupils are confident to ask questions, express

views and read aloud. They listen to others politely. On rare occasions this is not the case because pupils' concentration wavers or there is low-level disruption. However, the good relationships between staff and pupils are effective in restoring pupils' positive habits.

- The pupils who spoke to inspectors say that bullying is rare, and that staff deal with it effectively. This includes racist and homophobic bullying. Pupils spoke with maturity and clarity about these types of bullying and are adamant that they would not be tolerated at the school. Bullying records show that incidents of bullying are followed up and resolved effectively. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe from the risks of exploitation, including when using social media.
- Pupils say that staff are approachable and considerate of pupils' emotional and physical well-being. Leaders, including those responsible for governance, see these aspects as a priority. As a result, the support services provided by leaders are wide-ranging and meet pupils' requirements. For example, guidance is provided for pupils in Year 11 to support their mental well-being during preparation for examinations.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strong feature of the school's curriculum. Pupils value the community and self-progression lessons which leaders have introduced as part of their timetable. Their learning in these lessons tackles and explores a range of spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects and helps secure pupils' mature approach to relationships. The pupils who spoke to inspectors made it clear that they value people's differences, other faiths and cultures. They say that they and other pupils are confident to be who they want to be. Pupils understand and uphold the rights of all. They demonstrate a clear understanding of their responsibilities and role in modern Britain. Pupils from all year groups learn about and actively participate in the vast range of democratic opportunities available, such as the pupil leadership groups.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. They respect their teachers and one another. Pupils take pride in their work and are keen to learn well. There are rare occasions when pupils lose concentration or produce work which does not match the good standard of care seen elsewhere. This is a result of weaker teaching.
- Pupils conduct around the school is good. They move around the school in an orderly manner at breaktime, lunchtime and at the change of lessons. They arrive punctually at lessons. Pupils value the efforts which staff have made to provide an engaging and well-maintained school environment. They respond by treating the school environment with respect and not leaving litter lying around.
- Pupils say that they enjoy school and they would recommend it to others. As a result, they attend school regularly. Pupils' attendance overall matches that of others nationally. The actions which leaders have taken since the last inspection to support the better attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, such as the enhanced use of the information provided when pupils with weak attendance records join the school, have been effective. A significant majority of pupils who have had weak attendance previously, including those who join Year 7 or join the school at other

times in their education, transform their attendance and now come to school regularly.

- Leaders manage effectively the attendance, behaviour and safeguarding of pupils who attend alternative provision.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Recent examination results for pupils leaving the school have been mixed. Overall, they have been below the national average across a range of subjects. They have been weakest in modern foreign languages, history, geography and science, for boys and for the most able pupils. Pupils made weak progress in these aspects. However, pupils' examination results and the progress which they make have been stronger in other areas. For example, they have been above the national average in mathematics and for girls, and in line with others nationally in English.
- Evidence in pupils' books and the school's current assessment information identifies that the previous strengths are being sustained and, in some cases, improved. Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics, across all year groups. They also progress well in art, drama and physical education. Some aspects which have been weaker previously, most notably the progress of boys and that of pupils in modern foreign languages, have been strengthened and progress is also good. However, despite these strengths, progress in other subjects is not good. The weaknesses are especially apparent in geography, history and science. The progress which pupils make varies across subjects and requires improvement.
- All pupils study science in both key stages. Despite leaders' efforts to provide an effective learning experience for pupils, they have had limited success. Leaders and teachers are reviewing and supplementing the science curriculum to provide learning activities to overcome missing learning. However, because the current quality of teaching in science varies, too many pupils lack the depth of knowledge and fluency in their learning to attain the standard of which they are capable.
- Similarly, all pupils study geography and history at key stage 3 and follow an examination course in either of these subjects at key stage 4. Too often pupils do not make strong progress in these subjects because they are not provided with sufficient opportunities to think deeply. There is also a mixed picture of pupils' progress in computing and religious education.
- Overall, despite stronger practice in subjects such as English and mathematics, the progress of the most able pupils is not good. In those areas where the curriculum matches the interests and needs of these pupils, such as in art and mathematics, the most able pupils are provided with opportunities to think deeply and learn well. However, too often these strengths are not seen elsewhere, so the progress of the most able pupils suffers.
- Boys are making stronger progress than previously and similar progress to girls across a range of subjects, including English. Inspectors scrutinised the work of boys and found that where they are challenged by and interested in the curriculum, which is typically the case, they are making strides to learn well and catch up on any previously missed learning. However, despite these improvements, boys' progress can occasionally waver when their interests are not captured, such as in science.

- The special educational needs coordinator takes steps to support the effective learning of pupils with SEND. The information provided for teachers about these pupils is detailed. It is routinely updated and supported by staff training. However, although teachers know these pupils well and support their emotional and physical needs well, the focus on these pupils' academic progress varies. As a result, too many of these pupils do not make good progress.
- Evidence from pupils' work and the assessment information of current pupils shared by leaders show that despite an upward trend overall the progress of disadvantaged pupils is too varied. Where teaching is good, disadvantaged pupils make stronger progress, and this is especially so for the growing number of these pupils who attend school regularly. However, overall, despite these recent improvements, disadvantaged pupils do not make good progress.
- Leaders monitor effectively the quality of education for pupils who attend alternative provision. Leaders ensure these pupils benefit from an appropriate curriculum that prepares them effectively for the next stage of their education.
- A high proportion of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or with SEND, move on to the courses of their choice, which provide next steps in education and training after leaving the school.

School details

Unique reference number	138699
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	10057952

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	854
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Peter Hart
Headteacher	Alan Birchall
Telephone number	01942 728221
Website	www.byrchall.wigan.sch.uk
Email address	enquiries@admin.byrchall.wigan.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 March 2018

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Makerfield Academy Trust. It is the sole school in this trust.
- The school is an average-sized secondary school. The number of pupils on the school's roll is increasing.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is in line with the national average.
- The school uses alternative provision for a small number of pupils at Launchpad.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings took place with school leaders, teachers, governors and trustees of the Makerfield Academy Trust.
- Discussions were held with pupils from all year groups to gather their views on a variety of issues, including safeguarding, bullying, behaviour, teaching and the curriculum.
- Inspectors examined a range of the school’s documentation, such as the self-evaluation and improvement plan, assessment information, the pupil premium plan, attendance, bullying and behaviour records and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors took account of 44 staff survey responses, 86 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and 55 written responses from parents to Ofsted’s free-text facility.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school and scrutinised pupils’ work in a range of subjects and year groups. They were accompanied by school leaders on some of these observations.

Inspection team

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Linda Jones	Ofsted Inspector

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