

Failsworth School

Brierley Avenue, Failsworth, Manchester M35 9HA

Inspection dates	24–25 May 2016
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Results in 2015 indicate significant underachievement in English, mathematics, science and half of all other subjects. Despite recent improvements in levels of progress, pupils do not achieve as well as they should.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is improving. However, the achievement gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers remains too wide.
- Over time boys have achieved significantly less well than girls and this continues to be the case.
- Too few teachers encourage pupils to strive for excellence. Low expectations of what pupils can achieve have led to underperformance, particularly of the more able pupils.
- Too much teaching is uninspiring and does not match pupils’ needs. In these lessons some pupils behave in a way that disrupts the learning of others.
- The school’s marking policy is not followed routinely by all teachers; poorly presented work and weak literacy skills are not consistently tackled.
- Attendance has fallen from broadly in line with national figures to just below national figures, and the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent has risen.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers are fully aware of strengths and weakness in the school and have put appropriate and effective plans in place to secure rapid improvements in teaching and learning.
- The gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and their peers and between girls and boys in Year 7 are closing rapidly.
- Pupils behave well around the school during lunch and breaktimes, requiring little adult supervision.
- Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They understand well their responsibilities as active citizens and how to keep themselves and others healthy and safe.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure further improvements in the progress that pupils make, particularly boys, the disadvantaged, and more-able pupils by ensuring that:
 - teachers have high expectations of what all pupils can achieve
 - teaching in English and mathematics addresses the underachievement of boys
 - all teachers follow the school's feedback and marking policy and poorly presented work is consistently challenged.
- Reduce the incidence of low-level disruption by ensuring that lessons engage pupils well, are stimulating and are matched to pupils' learning needs.
- Improve rates of attendance, particularly of disadvantaged pupils.

It is recommended that the leadership commissions an external evaluation of how the school utilises the funds from the pupil premium.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The leadership team, with strong support from the interim executive board (IEB) and the local authority, have embedded a clear vision and ambition for the future of Failsworth School. Senior and middle leaders fully recognise that pupils' achievement is too low. A previous lack of urgency in tackling declining trends has been reversed. Well-considered, appropriately resourced actions are now in place and beginning to secure necessary improvements.
- Sophisticated systems for monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching enable senior and middle leaders to ensure that teachers receive bespoke professional training that meets their individual needs. Where there are insufficient signs of improvement in the quality of teaching, leaders are taking rapid and effective action to tackle underperformance.
- School documentation makes clear how funds from the pupil premium (funding provided to narrow the gap between the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and their peers) is being used to tackle academic underachievement, personal development and well-being. To date, the impact of this funding can be seen in key stage 3, where gaps in achievement are narrowing. However, despite overall improvements, the gaps remain wide in Years 10 and 11.
- Year 7 catch-up funding to improve literacy skills has had a positive impact on pupils' reading ages, with all making good progress towards reaching reading levels that match what is expected for their age.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and designed to provide alternative options for those who need them. Extra-curricular options are available in a variety of sports and performing arts and pupils benefit from their involvement in educational visits, competitions, and challenges such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.
- Pupils with particular academic, social or emotional needs are well provided for. The Gateway Centre in particular supports the social integration of those pupils with special educational needs and those new to the country who are at the early stages of learning English. The progress made by pupils who attend vocational and social skills-based courses off-site is closely monitored by the school to ensure that these alternative arrangements are having a positive impact.
- Staff morale is high. The teachers who met with inspectors value the training provided for them and the opportunities to share best practice across departments. They can see that as a result of bespoke training, improvements to their teaching are having a positive effect on pupils' progress. Middle leaders in particular appreciate the focus on developing their leadership skills.
- A strong programme for personal, social, health and economic education is having a very positive impact on pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves physically and emotionally safe and well. In citizenship classes pupils learn about global issues, equalities, the rule of law, human rights and democracy. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain and contributes to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school is popular with the local community. It is oversubscribed and the great majority of parents and carers who completed a school parental survey were supportive of the school and its leadership.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The members of the IEB are highly experienced and skilled educationalists who hold the leadership effectively to account. They share the senior leaders' vision for the school, have a strong grasp of its strengths, and understand where it needs to develop further.
 - The IEB members are proactive in the life of the school, are well informed and supportive. They have a good understanding of the school's finances, and a sound knowledge about the quality of teaching and the progress made by different groups of pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The checks made on staff, volunteers and visitors to the school are detailed and rigorous. Training for staff in all aspects of child protection, including preventing radicalisation, is appropriately recorded to ensure that all remain up to date.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Although the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is developing well, it requires further improvement because too many teachers continue to have low expectations of what pupils can accomplish and pupils do not achieve as well as they should, given their starting points.

- Where teachers follow the school's marking policy, pupils appreciate the opportunity it gives them to improve their work. However, lack of extended writing and poor presentation in the books of mainly disadvantaged pupils and boys often goes without comment from the teacher.
- Teaching is sometimes uninspiring and does not match pupils' needs, including the needs of the most able. In some lessons questions are low-level and fail to challenge pupils or deepen their knowledge and understanding; in other lessons opportunities are missed to tackle misconceptions. Where teaching is weak pupils sometimes become restless and misbehave.
- However, much of the teaching is now good and very little is inadequate. The overall improvements seen in the quality of teaching result from the extensive levels of professional training teachers are now receiving. The sharing of best practice across departments is a strong feature of this work and highly valued by the teachers engaging in it. Pupils who met with inspectors were of the view that in many classes work was now harder, questioning more challenging and the marking and feedback they received more helpful.
- Teachers are becoming much better informed about the progress being made by individual pupils and many are providing high levels of extra support to those that need it. The large numbers of pupils arriving at school early in the morning for extra study is testament to how much pupils value this provision.
- Teachers use resources and strategies that promote and celebrate diversity well. They challenge stereotypes and help pupils understand the lives of people from backgrounds different to their own.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils benefit from well-developed programmes for citizenship and personal, social, health and economic education that are taught by a team of specialist teachers. The curriculum plays a crucial part in helping pupils understand how to safeguard themselves and others. For example, all learn about issues such as consent and child sexual exploitation, how to stay safe online and how to prevent racist, homophobic and transphobic bullying. Displays in the corridors inform them of a range of support agencies they can turn to for further help and advice should they need it.
- Pupils behave appropriately around the building, where they are unfailingly polite and respectful. Those who met with inspectors did not think that bullying or discriminatory behaviour was a problem.
- The school's inclusion provision makes a good contribution to the social integration and overall achievement of those pupils with special educational needs or disabilities and those new to the country who are at the early stages of learning English.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Where teaching does not meet the needs of pupils their behaviour is sometimes disruptive.
- Pupils, particularly boys and disadvantaged pupils, do not always take pride in their work. This is most evident in mathematics and science exercise books.
- Despite considerable efforts on the part of the attendance team, attendance levels have fallen since 2015; the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent has risen, and the gap between the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and their peers shows no signs of narrowing.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Over recent years pupils' achievement has been well below expected standards by the end of key stage 4. Results in 2015 indicated a further decline in both attainment and progress in all subjects and for all groups of pupils.
- In previous years the school's predictions of how well pupils were likely to achieve were inaccurate and overgenerous. Predictions are now based on more robust systems of assessment that are verified by external bodies and are more secure. The school's predictions for attainment and progress in 2016 indicate a stronger picture than in the past with pupils making overall progress that is now in line with expectations. Observations of teaching and learning and the work seen in pupils' books match the school's predictions.

- The progress made by pupils with special educational needs or disability is similar to that of their peers. The small proportion of pupils undertaking vocational and personal well-being courses at off-site provision are making expected levels of progress.
- The gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and their peers and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally remains wide in key stage 4. Boys continue to achieve less well than girls, particularly in English and mathematics. More-able pupils achieve least well given their starting points.
- Pupils in key stage 3 are showing signs of much improved outcomes, particularly in Year 7. The progress and attainment of pupils in Year 7 has improved considerably in mathematics and English. The gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their peers is narrowing rapidly and the attainment gap between girls and boys is closing.
- The school's literacy policy is having a positive impact on reading levels in the lower school, although boys' literacy levels remain below those of girls and too few pupils choose to read widely and often.
- The proportion of pupils who move on to further education, training or employment is higher than the average. Pupils are supported in their next steps by effective careers information, advice and guidance that includes visits from local colleges and one-to-one interviews for more vulnerable pupils such as those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs.

School details

Unique reference number	105735
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	10012991

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	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,462
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	David Heyes
Headteacher	Neil Hutchinson
Telephone number	0161 688 3900
Website	www.failsworthlg.co.uk
Email address	info@failsworthlg.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	21–22 October 2014

Information about this school

- Failsworth is a larger-than-average 11 to 16 years co-educational school.
- Since the previous monitoring inspection the headteacher has left the school and been replaced by an interim executive headteacher.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for additional financial support through the pupil premium is higher than average.
- The school has a lower-than-average proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disability.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Fewer pupils than average have a minority ethnic heritage or speak English as an additional language.
- A total of 33 pupils from all year groups undertake a range of vocational and social skills-based courses at SkillsForce Development Limited, Teens and Toddlers, Oldham Care and Support, and Mahdlo Youth Zone.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- This is a Foundation School with Cooperative Trust Status. It works in partnership with five associated trust partner primary schools and the Failsworth Achievement Board.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the work of the school across a wide range of subjects and year groups. Some observations of teaching and learning were undertaken jointly with members of the leadership team.
- Inspectors met with pupils both formally and informally to listen to their views.
- Discussions were held with members of the interim executive board, a representative from the local authority, teaching staff, and with senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan; information relating to pupils' attainment and progress; attendance, behaviour and safeguarding records; teacher performance information; training records and school policies.
- Inspectors took account of the school's own parent survey information.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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