

Burscough Priory Science College

Trevor Road, Burscough, Lancashire, L40 7RZ

Inspection dates 10–11 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- The recently appointed headteacher has given a vision for the future and has implemented considerable change in a short time. This has resulted in rapid, all round improvement.
- The governing body achieves the right balance between trust and holding senior leaders to account for their actions.
- Students' behaviour is exemplary whether they are in lessons or unsupervised. They are naturally respectful of each other and adults. They have a genuine love for learning and respond very positively to the wealth of opportunities the school offers. Students know how to stay secure, because they are taught how to be safe. They take personal responsibility and look out for others. Procedures for ensuring safety are of a high standard.
- Achievement had previously been satisfactory and inconsistent. Improvements to teaching and the close monitoring of student progress are improving achievement, which is now good across the school.
- Teaching is improving, and is now good across the school. There are examples of outstanding practice. The best teaching is spread across a wide range of departments and some of this high quality practice has been established for some time.
- Staff and students are enthusiastic about the developments they are experiencing because they can already see real benefits to their hard work

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching, although good, is inconsistent. In a few lessons planning does not take into account the full range of needs within the group and teachers sometimes do not provide enough opportunities for students to be fully active in lessons
- There is a lack of consistency in the way school policies are applied, particularly for assessment, literacy and homework.
- Not all make confident and best use of the school's strategies to check students' progress and respond to any underachievement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors worked with senior staff while observing teaching and learning in 31 lessons and reviewing work previously completed by students. Inspectors spoke to many students during breaks and lunch times, and during some lessons.
- Inspectors observed activities taking place during the school's enrichment programme, known as the 'alternative curriculum'.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, senior leaders and with staff. A discussion was held with a representative of the local authority. Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including internal and external data about students' progress, school development planning, behaviour and attendance records, minutes of governing body meetings and students' work. They investigated safeguarding procedures and records.
- When planning the inspection, there were five responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). However, 41 responses were made during the inspection and all were taken into account. Inspectors scrutinised 47 questionnaires completed by members of staff.

Inspection team

Neil MacKenzie, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Chanan Tomlin	Additional Inspector
Janet Peckett	Additional Inspector
David Woodhouse	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Burscough Priory Science College is smaller than the average secondary school. After a period of staffing difficulties, a new headteacher took up post six months ago.
- The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is slightly smaller than that found nationally. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is just above average.
- A few students attend alternative provision for part of their education at Skelmersdale College and at Acorns, a local referral unit.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Using the existing outstanding practice in the school, develop the skills of all staff so that teaching is at least consistently good by:
 - using assessment information to plan learning activities that provide suitable challenge and specifically match the needs and potential of every student in the class
 - creating more opportunities for students to be fully active in lessons and increasing the use of paired and group activities
 - continuing to develop students' confidence to work independently, particularly through the improvement of homework
 - ensuring the school's assessment and literacy policies are applied consistently.
- Ensure all subject leaders, teachers and teaching assistants increase their role in monitoring student progress and intervene quickly when they identify students who are not progressing as well as they should.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' attainment on entry to the school is variable over time but generally above average. Students' results at the end of Year 11 continue to improve. Last year they were the highest they have been and were significantly above average. For example, results in art improved. Success in design and technology and physical education is long established. Last year, results in science were not as good as usual, but current standards are consistent with students' previous good achievement in this subject.
- The progress students made improved in 2012, particularly in English where it is now good. In mathematics, progress has always been strong. The progress of groups which were previously weaker, for example, high-ability girls and middle-ability boys, also improved. All students now make similar, good progress.
- Achievement is not yet outstanding because the progress made by students in lessons where teaching requires improvement is not good enough.
- Students who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium perform as well as others in mathematics. In English and other subjects, the gap is closing.
- Students who attend part time, off-site courses achieve as well as others.
- Due to the excellent quality of additional support and care, the achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is at least good and sometimes outstanding.
- Students' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills are good. The school is not complacent however, and has recently altered the way in which literacy skills in particular are being developed. Not all staff use the new strategy equally well and so the practice is currently inconsistent.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and has improved because of well targeted training and effective action by the headteacher and governing body to manage performance. After a recent review, the school is establishing new systems to improve consistency in the quality of teaching.
- There is a wide range of teaching quality with much that is good or outstanding. Some teaching truly inspires students who leave lessons hungry for more learning. These teachers have an excellent understanding of their subjects and of how best students learn. They engage the minds of all students in the class through a wide range of techniques and activities. Students are usually confident and feel free to talk enthusiastically, exploring the topic and expressing their opinions. These teachers do what all skilled people do: they make something look easy when it is not.
- Where teaching requires improvement, students are still ambitious to learn, but the pace of learning drops. Occasionally, the teachers work too fast for the students to grasp concepts fully. Usually, however, in these lessons teachers work too slowly and target only particular students in the group. Excellent examples of paired and group work seen in other lessons are not a feature of these lessons. Teachers do not use information well enough to plan lessons that meet the needs of all of their students.
- Structures to assess students' work and to guide them have been developed recently. When used continuously and with thought, assessments provide both the teacher and the student with valuable information. Some guidance is superficial and does not help students improve or extend their understanding.
- There are examples of excellent learning that has taken place at home. These highlight the enthusiasm of the students and are instrumental in enabling students to develop independence in their learning. However, the practice is too variable to make a widespread contribution to students' achievement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Whether in lessons, corridors, dining areas or outside, students are calm and happy. This is because they feel secure, have high expectations of their own behaviour and of the behaviour of others. They feel this is their school, and they are proud of it. Students are mature, respectful of others and demonstrate impressive moral development.
- Students are fully supportive of the recently implemented behaviour code, which they helped develop. They say that this has resulted in better learning. They are also supportive of changes to uniform. Students play a key role in managing behaviour. Students' attitudes are exemplary; they have a love of learning.
- When students do very occasionally misbehave, or struggle with personal difficulties, support systems are excellent. The work of The Tim Oakes Learning Centre is exceptional. Students who are not achieving their potential, for whatever reason, are guided and supported by very skilled practitioners. Students are helped to understand their behaviour, and if needed, are helped to modify it. The most important feature is that students are given support to develop their own skills to improve. The centre helps students with a wide range of difficulties, but all equally impressively.
- The attendance of students is consistently high. For the early part of this year further improvements to the quality of teaching and to the curriculum have contributed to exceptionally high attendance.
- The school educates students to understand all forms of bullying. Students believe that there is little or no bullying of any form. The school is rapidly becoming recognised as a leader in this field and is working with a professional association to develop understanding of homophobic bullying and strategies to eliminate it from all schools.
- Almost all parents agree that students are safe and behave well.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher took up post six months ago after a period of two and a half years of difficulty in senior staffing. She has brought vision, ambition and drive to the school. She has made widespread improvements, making the greatest impact on the quality of teaching, curriculum and care systems. Pupils speak highly of the headteacher and say their opinions are valued. Students can describe the changes and they can explain how these are improving their learning and personal development. Parents' views are very positive about the school. Current staff told inspectors, 'There is now a relentless striving for excellence.' Teachers are choosing to work hard and beyond what would normally be expected because as one said, 'The buzz and excitement among students and staff are refreshing.'
- Senior leaders have improved the system to monitor the progress of students. This now highlights students who are not progressing as well as they should. Senior leaders are then able to intervene, rectify any problems and enable students to make up any learning that is lost. Some subject leaders, teachers and teaching assistants use similar levels of scrutiny to ensure their work is of the highest quality. However, not all yet use this routinely and well.
- Students' personal growth is a priority and every aspect of the school's work enhances students' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The innovative developments to the curriculum epitomise the school's approach to improvement. There is something for every student in the curriculum because the students have helped develop it, and there is a suite of courses and qualifications to meet all needs. For all older students there is an excellent and enriching aspect called the 'alternative curriculum'. Students learn and develop personally though a wealth of courses from Chinese calligraphy to natural voice singing, geology and human health. Other students, realising the importance of English and mathematics work to improve their skills in these subjects. As one boy commented, 'I'm in Year 11, but I wish I was in Year 10 to get more of this.'

- The local authority provides good additional support for the school. It recognises the progress the school has made and is reducing the depth of support as a result. Senior leaders within the school are skilled at evaluating the quality of what they provide and demonstrate very good capacity to initiate highly effective change. This capacity is developing in other levels of leadership, in teachers and in support staff.
 - Procedures to ensure student safety are rigorous and child protection is a priority. Arrangements fully meet current requirements. For the very few students who attend off site, part time provision, care has been taken to ensure they are safe, they attend well and their behaviour is as good as other students in the school.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is changing the way it works. Members are supporting staff, and the headteacher in particular, by respecting their professional judgement but evaluating the impact of their work through the quality of students' learning and personal development. Their systems to evaluate performance are effective, and improving. Members are further developing systems to find out what students and parents think about the quality of education the school provides. The impact of governance is good and improving strongly.
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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

Unique reference number	119746
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	405885

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	730
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jez Hall
Headteacher	Catherine Edens
Date of previous school inspection	16 February 2011
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