

Montgomery High School – An Academy, Language College and Full Service School

All Hallows Road, Blackpool, Lancashire, FY2 0AZ

Inspection dates

7–8 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- The majority of students do not make the progress they are capable of in a range of subjects, including mathematics and science. School leaders have not tackled this quickly enough and therefore achievement is inadequate.
- Students eligible for support through the pupil premium are well behind other students in both English and mathematics.
- The most able students do not achieve their potential because teaching is not challenging enough. Students with special educational needs do not always receive the support they need to achieve well.
- Teaching is inadequate because expectations of what students are capable of are too low.
- Governors are not rigorous enough in holding staff and school leaders to account for students' achievement.
- There is widespread flouting of school policies because senior leaders do not challenge staff enough to make sure everyone follows them. As a result, well-intentioned initiatives to drive improvement have had insufficient impact.
- The school's self-evaluation of its work is inaccurate. Consequently, plans for improvement in the quality of teaching and students' achievement are not always sharply focused on the correct priorities.
- Behaviour requires improvement. Students are often late to lessons because they know not all teachers will challenge them. This leads to much lesson time being wasted.

The school has the following strengths

- The English department is a beacon to the school showing just what students can achieve when taught skilfully and with enthusiasm.
- Attendance has improved to be above average.
- The excellent range of activities, such as sport and visits both locally and abroad, enrich students' lives and support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 35 part lessons, including three observed jointly with senior leaders. An inspector observed a group of students reading. Inspectors observed and talked to students at break time and in the dining hall and also visited classes during form-time.
- During the inspection meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff, students and representatives of the local authority. A telephone conversation was conducted with two leaders of schools in the Fylde Coast Teaching School Alliance.
- The inspection team considered a wide range of documentation provided by the school when considering its judgements. This included information on students' achievement, attendance and behaviour, students' work, records of governing body minutes, school policies, the school's self-evaluation of its work and plans for improvement.
- Inspectors took account of the 41 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 31 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Joan Bonenfant, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paul Edmondson	Additional Inspector
Barbara Dutton	Additional Inspector
Christine Addison	Additional Inspector
Ann Ashdown	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 44 the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Montgomery High School is much larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students eligible for support through the pupil premium is average but increasing. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is well below the national average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average, and very few students speak English as an additional language.
- The vast majority of students are of White British heritage and there are slightly more girls than boys in the school.
- A very small number of students attend work-related training away from school for part of the week at Blackpool and the Fylde College of Further Education.
- Montgomery High School converted to become an academy school in April 2012. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The school takes an active part in the Fylde Coast Teaching School Alliance which aims to raise the standard of education in the local area.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching in order to accelerate the progress of all groups of students, particularly those eligible for the pupil premium, the most able students and those with special educational needs and raise standards across the school, especially in mathematics and science, by:
 - making sure all teachers adapt their teaching to the needs and abilities of all groups of students and that they move students on more quickly when it is clear they are ready
 - ensuring all teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve by increasing the level of challenge, particularly for the most able students so that they make good or better progress
 - developing teachers' questioning skills so that students are given more opportunities to explore issues in greater depth
 - improving the quality of marking in all subjects so that it is regular and precise, with clear information provided to students as to the next steps in their learning and provide students with the opportunity to respond to teachers' comments and improve their work
 - disseminating more effectively existing good practice
 - further developing existing guidelines to promote students' numeracy skills and making sure

all teachers follow these guidelines in the classroom.

- Improve students' punctuality to lessons by making sure all teachers challenge students when they arrive late and that students understand the consequences of not arriving on time.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - using performance management more effectively to eradicate underperformance and reward good practice
 - tightening up procedures to ensure all staff follow school policies by rigorously checking up on whether they are being implemented
 - ensuring all heads of department are effectively held to account for students' achievement in their area of responsibility
 - improving the overall leadership and management of teaching by checking that initiatives, policies and staff training are making a difference to practice in the classroom
 - improving self-evaluation so that it more accurately reflects the strengths and weaknesses of the school
 - sharpening procedures for collecting information on students' achievement so that it clearly demonstrates the progress they have made from their individual starting points and use this information more effectively to hold all teachers to account for the progress of students in their classes
 - ensuring that funds available through the pupil premium secure improvement in the achievement of students eligible for such support
 - undertaking an external review of governance to make sure governors challenge the school more effectively to raise standards. The external review should have a specific focus on the use of the pupil premium.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate recommends that Newly Qualified Teachers should not be appointed.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- In 2013, students who reached the end of Key Stage 4 made inadequate progress in a wide range of subjects, including mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and humanities.
- The most able students did not achieve their potential and a much lower proportion of these students than is seen nationally gained the top grades in their public examinations. This is because teaching over time has not been sufficiently challenging.
- Students eligible for support through the pupil premium made inadequate progress in most subjects, particularly those students who entered the school with average ability. In 2013, there was a wide gap in the attainment of students eligible for free school meals and other students in the school. They were over a grade behind their classmates in both English and mathematics and the proportion of these students who achieved five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics was well below the national average for this group of students.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make inadequate progress because teachers do not always provide appropriate support for these students.
- Information provided by the school during the inspection suggests that in 2014 there is likely to be a slight improvement in some measures for students in Key Stage 4, such as rates of progress in mathematics. However, the gap between the progress of students eligible for support through the pupil premium and other students, particularly in English and mathematics, although narrowing, remains too large.
- The green shoots of improvement in mathematics at Key Stage 4 are not mirrored in Key Stage 3, where progress in this subject is inadequate. Schemes of work do not build effectively on what students have already learned at primary school and expectations are not high enough as to what students are capable of. As a result, improvements in this subject are fragile at best.
- School leaders have not entered students early for public examinations in mathematics.
- Although the school's assessment information suggests that achievement in science is improving, evidence gathered during the inspection from lesson observations and looking at students' work in science showed that students in Key Stage 3 were making slow progress in this subject. Students spoken to during the inspection said that they feel they make the least progress in science.
- The school has been particularly effective in using the funds available for the Year 7 catch-up programme in supporting students with weak skills in reading and writing. Students' literacy skills are well-supported throughout the school through effective teaching of English and the infectious love of literature that members of staff in this department convey to their students. This is not the case with numeracy, where the funding has had little impact in helping students make up the ground they have lost, because not all teachers are consistently following the school's guidelines on supporting students' numeracy skills.
- A very small number of students attend work-related training away from school. These students achieve reasonably well overall and their placements sometimes help them to find employment when they leave school.
- Achievement overall in English bucks the trend in the school and most students do well, with a much higher than average proportion of students gaining the top grades in this subject. Achievement is also good in other subjects, such as art, design technology and child development and is improving quickly in modern foreign languages because school leaders tackled previous underperformance in this subject successfully.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching overall is insufficiently challenging for the groups of students the school serves, including the most able. Over time this has led to widespread underachievement across a number of subjects, including mathematics and science.
- Teaching is particularly weak in Key Stage 3, where students are frequently expected to complete work that they have already covered in primary school. This is a great impediment to them gaining knowledge and moving forward in their learning.
- Teachers often fail to take into account the abilities and prior learning of students when planning lessons, therefore the work does not stretch some of the most able students and provides insufficient support for others, leading to confusion and incompleteness of tasks. For example, in one Year 7 French lesson, students who had studied the subject for some time were expected to do the same work as students who had only started the subject in September. In this lesson most students did indeed make progress, but some struggled with aspects of what they were being asked to do. The teacher had good subject knowledge and the lesson had potential, but with just a little adjustment in planning all students could have made much better progress.
- Some teachers' expectations of how students should present their work are far too low. Teachers do not always challenge students if work is poorly presented or illegible. As a result, too few students take pride in their work and their books are often untidy.
- The school's marking policy is not followed systematically and therefore has insufficient impact on students' learning. Examples of excellent marking, for example in English, clearly demonstrate how teachers' comments are followed up and acted on by students leading to strong improvement in the standard of work. Unfortunately, because not all teachers are following the policy and not all heads of department are checking on them doing so, the quality of marking is extremely erratic and, in many books seen during the inspection, marking was having little and sometimes no impact on raising standards.
- Questioning is effective in some subjects, such as in English. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on Shakespeare's *'Romeo and Juliet'*, probing questions from the teacher helped to extend students' understanding of the plot, vocabulary and themes in the play. However, this is not universally in evidence and questioning lacks depth in many lessons.
- Teaching assistants are for the most part deployed effectively, particularly in supporting students in the 'Nurture Room'. The 'Nurture Room' provides a safe haven for students who are experiencing difficulties, helping to build their confidence so they can, as soon as possible, return to lessons.
- Teaching is of better quality in some subjects such as physical education, design technology and art leading to most students making good progress. Students spoken to during the inspection often cited these lessons as the ones they enjoy most.
- The large majority of parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire 'Parent View' feel that their child is taught well in the school; however, about a quarter of these parents do not think that their child receives appropriate homework.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Although the majority of students are attentive in lessons and complete their work willingly, when teaching is weak some students lose interest, start chatting and on occasion a very small minority show a lack of respect for their teachers.
- Students do not always arrive punctually to lessons because they know that not all teachers will follow the school policy and challenge them. As a result, too much lesson time is wasted as teachers have to repeat instructions and explanations to latecomers.
- Attendance has improved dramatically and is now above average. This is because school leaders have prioritised this area of the school's work, investing in a team of highly effective staff who work well with parents and students so the vast majority of students attend school regularly and on time.
- The school has successfully reduced the rate of exclusion, which is now below average.

- Students move around the school in an orderly fashion. They manage their own behaviour well in social spaces, such as the dining hall, requiring only minimal supervision. Relationships between students and staff are friendly and purposeful.
- Most students are of smart appearance and wear their uniform with pride. However, a small minority of students do not conform to the school's policy and arrive at school unsuitably dressed. This disregard for school rules is not always challenged by staff and so some students take advantage of this lax approach.
- Students enjoy taking responsibility, for example in organising the Year 11 'School Prom', or manning the reception desk in the school foyer. Students that the inspectors spoke to were invariably polite and helpful, with some going out of their way to show us how to get to where we were going.
- The school's work to keep students secure and safe is good. When we spoke to students, they could reel off a number of staff that they could go to if they had a problem.
- Racist incidents are very rare and followed up assiduously. The school takes a hard line on name-calling of any description.
- Students understand the different forms that bullying can take. Most students feel confident that bullying gets sorted out quickly, although a very small number of students spoken to expressed reservations about the effectiveness of teachers dealing with bullying as in their experience it had continued despite intervention by staff.
- The large majority of parents who completed the online questionnaire, 'Parent View', said that their child feels safe in school and that the school manages behaviour well. However, about a fifth of these parents felt that the school does not always deal effectively with bullying. The school regularly consults parents, for example, by asking them to complete questionnaires after parents' evenings. The very large majority of parents who have completed these questionnaires feel that the school deals well with incidents of bullying.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- School leaders at all levels, including governors, have not pulled together and acted with sufficient urgency in response to the poor examination results in 2013. As a result, they have been ineffective in sorting out quickly the weaknesses across the school that continue to stand in the way of all groups of students achieving well.
- The headteacher demonstrates a strong moral purpose and ambition to improve this school. Unfortunately, not all members of the school community show the same determination and some staff have let the school down by not pulling their weight to ensure all students get a good education.
- Procedures for senior and middle leaders to check up on whether teachers are following agreed school policies, for example on marking or punctuality to lessons, are far too lax. As a result, there are wide discrepancies across the school. Students take advantage of these loopholes, knowing that often teachers will not challenge them.
- The information that the school collects regarding how well students are doing does not help school leaders to gain an accurate view of students' progress. This is because it does not always show students' starting points so it is not clear exactly how much progress has been made. As a result, this information does not serve as a useful tool to hold staff to account for students' achievement.
- Performance management procedures have in the past been ineffective in weeding out underperformance. No evidence was seen by inspectors to show that underperforming staff had been kept back from pay increases. Recently strengthened procedures to manage the performance of teachers are not widely understood by the staff and have not had time to have had an impact.
- Self-evaluation is inaccurate. The school improvement plan is too wide-ranging and insufficiently sharply focused on the precise actions the school needs to take to improve standards quickly.

- Although there have been some improvements, for example in English and in attendance, underachievement in key areas is stubbornly persistent. As a result, school leaders do not demonstrate convincingly the capacity to improve this school quickly.
- Subject leadership is of variable quality. This is because subject leaders are not held to account with sufficient rigour for students' achievement in their area of responsibility. This is a caring school and support for underperforming subject leaders has been provided in abundance; however, this has not always been followed up by challenging staff effectively to 'raise their game', leading to repeated underachievement.
- Nevertheless, excellent practice exists in the school: the head of the English department exudes excitement, ambition and passion for the subject, contributing to year-on-year improvement in this curriculum area. She runs a 'tight ship', supported well by the committed and dedicated teachers in her department, demonstrating just how well the students of this school can achieve when taught skilfully and with enthusiasm. This good practice is not shared sufficiently effectively with other departments.
- The leadership and management of teaching overall are inadequate. School leaders have an overgenerous view of the quality of teaching because they do not use information on students' performance to inform their judgement, relying solely on lesson observations.
- Training to improve the quality of teaching is wide-ranging and well-received by staff but insufficient attention is given to checking up whether this is making a difference in the classroom. As a result, training has not had sufficient impact on making sure all teaching is of consistently good quality, leading to wide scale underachievement.
- The school has forged a range of productive partnerships with local institutions. For example, links with UCLan (the University of Central Lancashire), Blackpool and The Fylde Further Education College and the Blackpool Sixth Form College, coupled with the school's strong programme for careers' information, advice and guidance, have contributed well to students making informed choices about the next steps in their lives. As a result, the proportion of students not going on to further education, training or employment is very low. Leaders in other schools in the Fylde Coast Teaching School Alliance speak very highly of the headteacher's personal contribution to driving improvements in education across the local area.
- The curriculum provides a wide range of appropriate qualifications for students to choose from: a particular strength is the number of foreign languages on offer, ranging from several European languages to Mandarin. Students spoke enthusiastically about the many wonderful opportunities they have to travel to other countries and a great number of students enjoy the excellent sporting activities available after school. This contributes well to students' physical well-being.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well through lessons, charitable work and links with schools in other parts of the world. A particular strength is the recently established connection with the Royal Shakespeare Company, bringing 'The Bard' to Blackpool. This is a further example of the excellent work of the English department in enriching the lives of students and the wider community.
- The school does not promote equality effectively because there are unacceptably wide gaps in achievement between students entitled to support through the pupil premium and other students in the school. However, the school does its best to tackle discrimination by providing an inclusive environment where diversity is appreciated and prejudice challenged.
- The school's engagement with parents is effective, particularly in relation to students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. The impact of this work is evident in the greatly improved attendance of such students. Responses to the online questionnaire, 'Parent View', were generally very supportive of the school and the majority of parents say that they would recommend the school to other parents.
- Safeguarding procedures meet requirements.
- The headteacher, supported by the governing body, has successfully eradicated a substantial deficit budget and the school is now in a much healthier financial position than it has been for several years. As a result, the school is far better placed to go forward.
- **The governance of the school:**

- This loyal and dedicated governing body was sorely disappointed with the examination results last year. However, governors have not acted swiftly enough to challenge the school confidently and directly to sort out underperformance. As a result, improvement has proceeded at far too slow a pace and large pockets of underachievement persist.
- Governors have not used performance management smartly so that it drives up the overall quality of teaching. They have been too willing to accept what school leaders have told them regarding the quality of teaching and have not challenged this by critically examining the impact of teaching on students' achievement.
- Although the governing body appointed a governor to focus on the achievement of students eligible for support through the pupil premium, this has so far been ineffective as there are still unacceptably large gaps between the achievement of this group of students and their classmates. School leaders know that this is not good enough and have already commissioned an external review of the use of the pupil premium by a National Leader in Education from an outstanding school in Liverpool which is due to take place in the near future.

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	137973
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	441274

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	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,441
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs G Neale
Headteacher	Mr S Brennand
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2011
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