

Durham Johnston Comprehensive School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114312
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	357518
Inspection dates	15–16 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Ann Wallis

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	1509
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	334
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr David Anderson
Headteacher	Mrs Carolyn Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by six additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 35 lessons and saw 35 teachers teach. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and students. They observed the school's work, and looked at students' books, safeguarding information, students' progress data and other documentation. They analysed 417 questionnaires from parents and carers and also those from students and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- What the features are of students' personal development, the curriculum, care, guidance and support, leadership and management and the sixth form which support the school's evaluation of them as outstanding.
- Whether all groups of students make good progress in all subjects, particularly girls and especially in languages.
- Whether assessment is consistently good across the school and used effectively to plan future learning.

Information about the school

This is a well-above-average sized secondary school, with a large sixth form, which has specialist status for languages. A below-average proportion of students is known to be eligible for free school meals. The percentage of students from minority ethnic groups is average as is that of students who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school has gained Healthy School and International School status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school where students make good progress and where their attainment is high. Achievement is outstanding. Durham Johnston promotes equal opportunities exceptionally well for all its students and equips them with excellent knowledge, skills and personal qualities to enable them to become very valuable members of a global society. The leadership of the school by members of the governing body, the headteacher and senior staff is outstanding. Senior leaders are highly self-critical and evaluate the school's work extremely rigorously. Any weaknesses are tackled immediately and very effectively. Members of the governing body, leaders and managers are all fully involved in determining the strategic direction of the school and improvement planning is excellent. Hence the school has outstanding capacity to improve further.

Students make good progress as they move through the main school in response to the good teaching they receive. In the sixth form, teaching, learning and the progress students make are all outstanding. Across the school there is a firm focus on the pursuit of academic excellence and in most lessons work is very challenging, is particularly well-matched to the needs of the students and proceeds at a rapid pace. This is especially true in the sixth form. In a few lessons the pace of learning is slightly slower when students have less well-developed listening skills or work is not quite as closely matched to their needs. The positive impact of the school's specialist status for languages and the highly-effective partnerships with schools, colleges, the university and other agencies that the school has forged all enrich the outstanding curriculum.

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support which contribute extremely well to the personal development of all students. Students have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. The school has outstanding safeguarding procedures and consequently students say that they feel extremely safe in school. Students respect and are proud of the new school building in which they work. Most have a highly-developed understanding of social and moral issues and treat each other, school staff and visitors with kindness and courtesy. The school's extensive links with other countries and the outstanding way in which community cohesion is promoted have ensured their full understanding of communities and cultures which differ from their own. The high standards students reach in literacy and numeracy combined with their well-developed teamwork skills, punctuality and good attendance mean they have an excellent preparation for the world of work. They make an outstanding contribution to their own and the wider community through numerous events which vary from organising sporting activities for very young children to singing in the cathedral and fund raising for local, national and international charities.

The school engages well with most parents and carers and communicates with them regularly through parents' evenings, reports, newsletters and, increasingly, the school's

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web site. However, a small minority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire feel the school does not communicate with them sufficiently well for them to support their children's learning fully and hence this is an area which can be developed further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen communications with parents and carers so they feel better able to support their children's learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

In lessons most students work extremely hard, are very keen to succeed and really enjoy learning. In a physics lesson, for example, students participated enthusiastically in doing step-ups and press-ups to demonstrate links between energy and exercise and developed an excellent understanding of the scientific principles involved. Discussions with students, work in their books and the school's very detailed tracking data all confirmed that their achievement is outstanding. From above-average starting points when they enter the school all groups of students and both genders make good progress as they move through the school. Results in examinations have been consistently significantly above average for the last three years. School data indicates that current students are on track to reach or exceed their challenging targets this year. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from very timely and well-targeted intervention in their learning to ensure they are given the extra help they need and they make the same good progress as their peers as a result.

Students are punctual, attend school regularly and behave well. Many aspects of their personal development are outstanding. It is these qualities, combined with their high attainment in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, their high levels of competence in using information and communication technology (ICT) and their willingness to take responsibility for themselves and others that make them outstandingly well-equipped for future life.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are good. They are never less than satisfactory and in some lessons they are outstanding. Teachers are both extremely knowledgeable and very enthusiastic about their subjects. They explain concepts clearly and communicate their enthusiasm to their students. Challenging work ensures that in most lessons students remain closely focused on the task in hand, enjoy and make at least good progress. Varied tasks, interesting and engaging resources and the good use of information and communication technology (ICT) all add to students' enjoyment of learning. Work is marked regularly and in some departments there are examples of excellent practice in the way students work and progress is assessed and the results of assessments used to plan future learning. However, whilst the quality of assessment is good overall, it varies across the school.

The curriculum is innovative, is reviewed regularly and is finely-tuned to meet the needs of all groups of students. A very wide range of GCSE and vocational courses arranged into six different 'pathways' allows older students an excellent choice of suitable courses. The impact of the school's specialist status is seen in the range of languages offered, and in the significantly above-average proportion of students who attain a GCSE in a language. Despite considerable technical problems, the school has integrated the use of ICT into all areas of learning. It was seen to be particularly effective in art and music, in enriching students' learning and providing valuable skills for the future. Participation rates are high in the huge range of extra-curricular activities the school provides.

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Care, guidance and support are outstanding because there is well-targeted individual support for students, especially those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. There are many examples of individual students whose attendance and attainment have risen and whose enjoyment of school has been transformed by the effective intervention of school staff and specialist agencies. Excellent links with other schools and colleges and high-quality preparation for higher education ensure very smooth transition for students between different stages of their education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

A crystal-clear shared vision, talented and decisive leadership by the headteacher and senior team, exhaustive data analysis and skilled and perceptive monitoring of teaching and learning are all strengths which characterise the outstanding leadership of the school. When detailed analysis of data has revealed, for example, that attainment by some groups of girls, or in some languages is an area of relative weakness, immediate and effective action has been taken to remedy the situation and bring about improvement. Governance is outstanding because members of the governing body are highly-involved in strategic planning and provide excellent challenge and support in equal measure. All students achieve equally well because the school's promotion of equal opportunities is excellent. Safeguarding policies and procedures are outstanding. Well-organised and very thorough safeguarding checks are in place for all staff and site security is comprehensive. The school promotes community cohesion extremely well at local, national and global level. Its extensive overseas links, promotion of the study of languages and many trips and visits ensure students have an excellent understanding of a variety of different cultures and communities.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is outstanding. Students make exceptional progress and attainment is high, which enables those who wish to remain in education to gain entry to their choice of university. Students enter the sixth form with high levels of attainment at GCSE and although they find the pace of work demanding, appreciate its importance to their final success and outcomes. There are high levels of retention and attendance rates during both Year 12 and Year 13. Any areas of underachievement in Year 12 are quickly detected, and effective targeted interventions are taken to ensure that students then make good progress in Year 13.

Students greatly appreciate the opportunities, both curricular and extra-curricular, that admission to the sixth form gives them, although some suggest that more sport and involvement in the rest of the school would be welcome. The learning and progress in a range of sixth-form lessons observed were outstanding and the teaching and activities given to the students were extremely well matched to their ability range. The curriculum is highly effective in meeting the needs of the students, with some subject groups, such as Spanish, operating with low numbers in order to provide the breadth of curriculum they need for the full range of university entry requirements. The care, support and guidance provided by the teachers ensure students are well-prepared for their learning and entry into higher education. The previously outstanding effectiveness of the sixth form identified in the previous inspection has been securely maintained.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers are pleased with the education the school provides. They particularly appreciate the way in which the school helps their children to gain good examination results. Data indicates that attainment in tests and examinations is high and inspectors found overall attainment in lessons also to be high. A few parents and carers commented that the school did not communicate with them sufficiently well to help them support their child's learning. Inspectors found the school's engagement with parents and carers to be good although they recognise that this is an area the school can improve further

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Durham Johnston Comprehensive School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 417 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1509 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	134	32	242	58	35	8	6	1
The school keeps my child safe	169	41	232	56	10	2	2	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	127	30	253	61	26	6	6	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	146	35	228	55	34	8	2	0
The teaching is good at this school	127	30	257	62	21	5	3	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	77	18	223	53	86	21	10	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	65	16	245	59	74	18	14	3
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	111	27	243	58	27	6	8	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	119	29	246	59	38	9	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	112	27	255	61	29	7	8	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	58	14	225	54	63	15	15	4
The school is led and managed effectively	121	29	250	60	19	5	4	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	144	35	245	59	18	4	4	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



17 February 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Durham Johnston Comprehensive School, Durham, DH1 4SU

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school this week. We are particularly grateful to those of you who gave up your time to discuss with us your experience at school. Please thank your parents and carers for filling in our questionnaire.

This is what we have said about your school in our report.

- Yours is an outstanding school where teaching and learning are good, you make good progress, your attainment is high and your achievement is outstanding.
- The care, guidance and support you receive, the curriculum you follow and the way your school is led and managed are all outstanding.
- The sixth form is outstanding.
- Many aspects of your personal development are outstanding and you are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of your education, for future work and to become members of a global society.

This is what we have asked the staff to do in order to improve your school further.

- Strengthen communications with your parents and carers so they feel better able to support your learning.

You can all help your school to maintain its outstanding effectiveness by continuing to work with your teachers to achieve the very best you can.

Yours sincerely,

Ann Wallis

Lead Inspector

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