

# Ponteland Community High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122358
<b>Local authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	380455
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	David Selby

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	13–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,121
<b>Of which number on roll in the sixth form</b>	320
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Michael Brown
<b>Headteacher</b>	Stephen Prandle
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 March 2009
<b>School address</b>	Callerton Lane Ponteland Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE20 9EY
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## Introduction

### Inspection team

David Selby	Additional inspector
Lynne Horton	Additional inspector
Peter Bannon	Additional inspector
Peter Eves	Additional inspector
Barbara Waugh	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 49 lessons taught by 49 teachers and visited morning registration sessions and assemblies. They held meetings with senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and groups of students. Inspectors examined documents including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, minutes of meetings, records of attendance and behaviour, the bullying and racist incidents logs and the single central record of safeguarding checks. They scrutinised a broad range of students' work through sampling their books and files and in lessons. They considered completed questionnaires from 142 students, 28 members of staff and 160 parents and carers although the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) was not used in planning the inspection because no responses had been recorded.

## Information about the school

Ponteland Community High School is larger than the average-sized secondary school with a large sixth form. It serves students from Year 9 to Year 13. The current headteacher has a part-time secondment to the National College for School Leadership and works with an associate headteacher in the school. A new headteacher has been appointed to take up post in September 2012.

The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The percentage of disabled students or those with special educational needs is low. Few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language. The school has a specialism in languages and holds an International School award. It is a Fairtrade School and a Healthy School and has been awarded the Artsmark Silver. The school's performance exceeds the government's current floor standard which sets the minimum expectation for attainment and progress.

**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

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key Findings

- This is a good school. Achievement is strong overall and the progress of students is increasing. The sixth form is good which reflects the quality of outcomes, teaching and organisation. Behaviour in the school is good. School leaders are effective in shaping and directing the work of the school. The school is not outstanding because teaching, while good overall, is inconsistent and weaker teaching limits the learning of some students.
- Inspectors observed students making good progress in lessons. Students attain academic standards which are well above the national average. They achieve particularly well in science in the main school. Progress in English and modern languages has been weaker but senior leaders have taken effective action to respond to circumstances which might reduce student achievement in these subjects.
- Teaching is good. There is some weaker and less frequently outstanding practice. Teachers' have good subject knowledge but do not always plan lessons to take account of students' different requirements. Students are keen to learn but have relatively few opportunities to organise their own learning or assess their own and other students' work. Marking is of variable frequency and quality.
- The behaviour of students around the school is good. They are polite and respectful to adults and each other and are calm and responsible in the sometimes busy corridors and dining area. Incidents of racist behaviour and bullying are rare. Behaviour is good or better in the large majority of lessons although there are occasional instances of poor behaviour in class. Attendance in the school is average and punctuality is good.
- School leaders have a clear and shared vision for the school. Opportunities to develop leadership skills have been used thoughtfully and have contributed to improvement. The school's curriculum provides a good range of appropriate experiences for students. Leadership of teaching and management of performance are good.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the consistency of the quality of teaching so that it is at least good and more is outstanding by:
  - ensuring that all teachers plan and deliver lessons which meet the needs of different groups of students through carefully targeted tasks and resources
  - providing more opportunities for students to be active and independent in all their learning
  - expecting students to evaluate their own and others' work more frequently
  - ensuring that all teachers mark student's work to a high standard with frequent and clear feedback on how to improve and that there is regular checking for student responses.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Most students enter the school with attainment which is above the national average. They make good progress overall and gain GCSE results which are above average in most subjects. Learning in science is particularly strong with very high attainment. Progress leading up to GCSEs in 2011 in English and modern languages was hampered because a number of teachers had unexpected long-term absence. This situation was managed well by the school but it inevitably affected the continuity of teaching in these subjects and had some impact on students. It is now fully resolved and the school's monitoring indicates that students are making good progress in these areas. This was seen in lesson observations during the inspection. There is little variation in the progress made by different groups of students. Disabled students and those with special educational needs make similar progress to other students in the school. Progress of students in the sixth form fell after the last inspection but has now risen and is good.

Ofsted questionnaires and discussion with students indicate that most feel they learn a lot in lessons and are helped to achieve well. Students comment that their learning is faster when teachers give them helpful feedback and involve them in assessing their work. Inspection findings support these views. Inspectors saw slower progress when students were not encouraged to use their good wider skills to manage their own learning or when tasks and activities were too hard or too easy. Students' enthusiasm to learn and progress in some lessons is supported by effective use of information and communication technology (ICT).

Although the number of responses to the Ofsted questionnaire was relatively small, most parents or carers who responded were right to feel that children make good progress and develop their wider communication, literacy and mathematical skills well.

## Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is good. Inspectors saw the strongest teaching in Year 9. Teachers have strong subject knowledge which gives students confidence. There are positive relationships in classes which have been encouraged through the school's work to create a good climate for learning. The best teaching follows careful planning which identifies how to challenge each student and involves them in understanding the quality of their work and how to improve. This was the case in a very effective Year 10 drama lesson in which students were acting as directors in response to others' work. In the strongest lessons teachers use lively questioning to maintain a fast pace although this is frequently directed too closely to individual students. Others listen but are not challenged to develop their own ideas. The school has helped teachers to develop a wide range of interesting and engaging teaching approaches but these are not used by all teachers. In weaker lessons, students spend time on undemanding tasks such as copying from text books.

The approach to and standard of marking varies. At its best it is detailed and regular giving precise feedback to guide students on how to improve. Students appreciate this and then respond well. Marking in some books, however, is sporadic and does little more than acknowledge that work has been covered. In these books it is not clear that teachers check rigorously that students have completed work or done any additional tasks required by their teacher. The marking of tests and assessments is completed more thoroughly and is used to provide good quality information to track student progress and determine setting arrangements.

The school has started to have a more systematic approach to the development of literacy skills in all lessons. Teachers have still to embed common approaches. Mathematical and communication skills are used with confidence in other subjects. An audit of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural experience led to a review of the teaching of personal development. Students have weekly opportunities to build their understanding and skills in this area. While the school identifies this as an important part of the curriculum, not all students find their lessons in it interesting. Students enjoy and enthusiastically take part in longer activities which support good development in areas including being enterprising, knowing about other countries and living in society.

Most questionnaire responses from students, parents and carers agree that teaching is good. Some parents and carers commented that the quality of teaching varied between classes. Inspectors took particular note of this in observing lessons, considering the school's views on teaching and speaking with students. They found that, while teaching is good overall there was some inconsistency particularly in Key Stage 4.

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students behave well as they move around the school site and use their social areas properly. There is very good collaborative and calm behaviour as students wait to be served in the busy dining area. Behaviour is good or better in the very large majority of lessons. When teaching is most effective and students engage productively and enthusiastically in their learning, their behaviour can be exemplary. This was

observed in well planned sixth form lessons in business and law where interesting and active tasks encouraged all students to learn quickly by participating in ways which moved them out of their learning 'comfort zone'. In contrast, inspectors saw poor behaviour contributing to slow rates of progress in a very small number of lessons in Key Stage 4. Learning starts quickly in classes because punctuality is good.

The school has done considerable work to strengthen behaviour management in developing its 'Respect and Responsibility' agenda. Students are proud to discuss how they and their parents and carers have been involved in this. It has built on previous good behaviour and contributed to further reduction in the low numbers of exclusions from school. Students are aware of what is expected of them and understand how this helps everyone to learn. Although a few parents and carers report that there are some instances of bullying, students say that bullying is rare and staff take effective action if it happens. Students are taught about different forms of bullying and know who to talk to if they have any concerns. Almost all students say they feel safe in school and they are taught how to be safe in practical lessons including science, physical education and ICT.

Attendance is average and the school is implementing effective strategies to improve this further. A high proportion of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire consider that the school manages students' behaviour well.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher and senior staff have a clear vision and appropriate priorities for the work of the school. These centre on learning and achievement. It has used the opportunity presented by the headteacher's secondment to the National College for School Leadership to develop other leaders' skills. The new headteacher due to take up post in September is already considering how he will move the school forward. Middle leaders' skills have been strengthened through high quality professional development and the school has clear expectations of their responsibilities and accountabilities. Leadership systems in the sixth form are well-established and have helped leaders to respond well, reversing recent dips in student achievement. The governing body provides good support and invests time in providing challenge to both senior and middle leaders.

The clear school development plan is guided by the school's self-evaluation system and targets the most significant issues for the school. Recent improvements in, for example, progress and attendance have followed previously planned actions. The school has a systematic approach to observing lessons which gives helpful information when planning development activity for teachers. Joint observations with an inspector showed a close match when evaluating achievement in lessons, quality of teaching and classroom behaviour although the school's long term grading of teaching quality was more generous.

The curriculum meets the needs of students well by providing a wide range of learning experiences in lessons and more widely. Guidance and support as students transfer into the school and between key stages is planned for well. The number of students who leave school and do not take up further education, employment or training is very small. The school has provided a good model for its wider community

in its work on fair trade and uses international links including its partnership with a school in China to support student's understanding of other cultures. Some opportunities for the development of student's spiritual, moral, social and cultural education in lessons are not fully planned for or exploited.

The school has developed its work with parents and carers. There is half-termly reporting and the school has established an active 'Family Forum' which has allowed parents and carers to have their say in school development. E-mail is increasingly used for rapid communication and the school's website provides a good range of useful information.

The school's policies and procedures promote equality of opportunity. The good achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs is built on the same robust target setting system as for all students. Safeguarding arrangements are systematic and meet requirements. The school's good capacity to improve further is demonstrated by the rise in students' progress and reduced variability in the achievement of different groups. The range and quality of contact with parents and carers has also improved since the previous inspection.



## 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



23 March 2012

Dear Students

**Inspection of Ponteland Community High School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne  
NE20 9EY**

Thank you for the help you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. Particular thanks go to those of you who gave up their time to speak to inspectors and those who completed questionnaires. Your views helped us to build our picture of the school.

The inspectors judged Ponteland Community High to be a good school. We can understand why so many of you say you are happy to come to school. We were very pleased to see your sensible behaviour, the way you work together and the positive relationships you have with your teachers and visitors. Standards of attainment in the school are high and you are making good progress. We agree that the school helps you to do well and that it offers you a wide range of learning opportunities.

The headteacher, the new headteacher who is due to join the school in September, governors and senior leaders are determined to make the school even better and know what is needed to make this happen. We saw that, while teaching is good overall, it does vary in quality and so have asked the school to make sure that more teaching is outstanding. We recommend that your teachers plan lessons which will stretch each of you and give you more ways to be independent in your learning. Some of your teachers mark work in detail and tell you clearly what you need to do to improve it, we would like all teachers to do this. We also found that you could be more involved in assessing your own and other's work; we think this should happen. You have an important part to play by making sure you do what your teachers ask in lessons and when they mark your work. We are sure you will try hard to do this.

On behalf of the inspectors, I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

David Selby  
Lead inspector

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