

Bedlingtonshire Community High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122360
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	359235
Inspection dates	8–9 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Lee Northern HMI

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	13–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	749
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	166
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Ann McKay
Headteacher	Mr Kieran McGrane
Date of previous school inspection	8 July 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 30 lessons, each taught by a different teacher. Of these, two were observed jointly with senior leaders from the school. Year 11 students were not in school at the time of the inspection and the numbers of students in Years 12 and 13 were reduced as a consequence of formal examinations. Inspectors held meetings with groups of students, members of the governing body and school staff, and conducted a telephone conversation with the School Improvement Partner. They observed the school's work, scrutinised a range of documentation and examined evaluations undertaken by the school to ensure that it meets statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding. In addition, 89 questionnaires from parents and carers were scrutinised and inspectors also examined questionnaires returned by staff and those from a representative sample of students.

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

- The impact of actions taken to improve achievement in mathematics, including through the use of mentoring and other support.
- The extent to which leaders and managers at all levels have been effective in securing improvements in teaching and learning and in reducing the variation in performance across subject areas, including in the sixth form.
- The extent to which the curriculum – including in the sixth-form – is effective in meeting the needs and aspirations of all groups of students, including those students most at risk of disaffection.
- The effectiveness of measures taken to improve attendance and the impact of approaches to develop students' basic skills, particularly in numeracy.

Information about the school

Bedlingtonshire Community High School is a smaller-than-average comprehensive school that serves a large area around the town of Bedlington. It is federated with a middle school with which it shares the same site, governing body and headteacher. Almost all students are of White British heritage and there are currently no students attending the school who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Around one fifth of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and a broadly average proportion has a statement of special educational needs. The school has held specialist status for mathematics and computing since September 2008. It also holds the School's Curriculum Award and has Investors in People 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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Bedlingtonshire Community High School is a rapidly improving school that provides a satisfactory standard of education for its students. Some aspects of its work are good and the provision of care, guidance and support is a significant factor in this improvement. The impact of this provision is seen in the rapidly reducing trend of exclusions, the very high proportion of leavers who move on to education, employment or training and the positive attitudes to learning displayed by students in their lessons. Parents and carers, too, recognise the quality of the care provided for students: 'I have always found staff – from the headteacher to support staff – extremely supportive, to have high standards and to want the best for my child,' was a comment typical of many received by inspectors.

In the examinations in 2010, 79% of Year 11 students secured five or more good grades at GCSE, which represented a significant improvement on the results of the previous year. However, the proportion of students reaching this benchmark when English and mathematics are included was much lower, although in line with the government floor target for this measure. This was due mainly to students' low attainment in mathematics. However, inspection evidence confirms that students' progress across a range of subjects – including in mathematics – is now rising rapidly and securely. This is due to several factors: improvements in the overall quality of teaching; a broader curriculum offer that better meets the needs of all students; and the impact of targeted support through intervention and mentoring, particularly for students in Year 11.

The drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning has been concerted and effective. Underpinned by a wide-ranging and imaginative programme of professional development for staff, the proportion of teaching that is good or better is rising, including in the sixth form. However, there remains variation in the quality of teaching and rates of progress across the school. Senior leaders have rightly identified the need to continue to improve the effectiveness of middle leaders in supporting improvements in the quality of teaching. The best lessons capture students' interest well and engage them actively in their learning. They provide activities tailored to the needs of different groups in the class and require students to work together to solve problems. However, not enough lessons consistently provide these opportunities for students' rates of progress to accelerate further. In addition, there are inconsistencies in the quality of feedback provided to students to help them to improve their work – particularly in the main school – with much work that is rarely marked or with comments that are not effective in helping students to reach their target grades.

Improvements to provision are encouraging more students to attend school regularly, although overall attendance remains below the national average. Levels of persistent absence, in particular, are affected by the number of students who join the school mid-year, some of whom have poor attendance records. The school has a range of measures

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in place to promote good attendance which it is pursuing with determination although it is too soon to see the impact of many of these strategies.

Leaders and managers at the school demonstrate good capacity to improve further. The headteacher has succeeded in establishing a culture of continuous improvement and raised expectations. Self-evaluation is accurate and perceptive and there are good plans in place to bring about improvement. Instances of inadequate teaching have been successfully addressed and levels of accountability for students' performance have been greatly strengthened, underpinned by the more rigorous use of assessment information. Morale at the school is good and the drive for further improvement is very widely shared by staff at all levels.

Up to 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit from an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by:
 - continuing to improve the rates of progress of students in all their subjects, particularly in mathematics
 - ensuring students are consistently provided with written and oral feedback about their work that makes clear the steps they need to take to reach their target grades
 - rapidly improving levels of attendance and reducing the proportion of students who are persistently absent from school.
- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring all teaching consistently meets the needs of all groups of students
 - providing greater opportunities for students to work collaboratively in lessons and to be more actively involved in their learning
 - improving the consistency and effectiveness of middle leaders in driving improvements in teaching and learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students' attainment on entry to the school is below average and they make satisfactory progress overall. As a result of actions to improve the quality of teaching, the rates of students' progress in lessons are often good or better and levels of attainment are rising, particularly in mathematics, in science and across a range of vocational subjects. Students make slower progress in design and technology where the quality of teaching is more variable and where adjustments to the curriculum to meet the needs of students have only recently been implemented.

Overall, there is little difference between the achievement of boys and girls, and a higher proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals are on track to secure five or more good grades at GCSE than reached this standard in 2010. The progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is enhanced through the work of learning assistants who encourage and facilitate good learning in lessons.

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However, these students make slower progress in some lessons where activities are not always sufficiently well adapted to meet their needs.

Students say they enjoy coming to school and feel very safe while they are there. They say that bullying is rare and that adults deal promptly and effectively with it when it occurs. Students' behaviour is good. The school is a calm and orderly environment and learning is only very rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. Students' understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle is promoted well through the tutorial programme. Students make good use of the healthy options available in the school canteen, and their participation in physical education – both within and outside the school day – is good. Students make a valued contribution to the life of the school and they say they greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet and share their ideas and views with the headteacher through the 'student of the month' scheme. Enhanced by the work of the specialism, the curriculum enables all students to gain valuable qualifications in information and communication technology (ICT) and a small number of students are supported well in acquiring useful accreditation in basic skills.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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?

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and is improving. In the best lessons, students engage enthusiastically with tasks that are well matched to their abilities and interests and these lessons proceed with a brisk pace that does not inhibit learning.

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Good questioning encourages all students to think more deeply about their answers, and open-ended, problem-solving activities enable students to work together in pairs and small groups. In an outstanding science lesson for Year 9 students, characterised by good relationships and very high expectations, students worked with much enthusiasm using resources designed to stimulate discussion and collaboration. In less effective teaching and learning, students are unclear about what they are learning in the lesson and why. Such lessons are often characterised by a range of activities that is too narrow and do not provide opportunities for students to work together effectively.

The curriculum makes a significant contribution to improving outcomes. As a result of changes to widen choice for students, the match of courses to students' needs and aspirations is much improved. The quality of care and guidance is good. For example, the provision to meet the needs of students who may be vulnerable to disaffection is ensuring that far fewer of these students are now underachieving. Typical of the many comments received from parents and carers in this regard was: 'My son was at risk of exclusion from his previous school. This school has supported and encouraged him and he is now doing well academically and he is happy.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has led the school well through a period of some turbulence following the establishment of the federation. He has dealt decisively with issues related to staffing and has been robust in tackling underperformance. Lines of accountability are clear and the school tracks and evaluates students' progress well, including across the range of different groups of students that it serves. As a result, the variations in attainment across these different groups are reducing. Assessment information is being used to hold departments and teachers more closely to account for the progress of individual students. Targets are appropriately challenging and, as a result, the expectations of staff and students are rising. Middle leaders have a good understanding of their role and responsibilities, although there remains some inconsistency in their effectiveness in driving improvements to teaching and learning.

The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory and it meets its statutory duties well. The annual 'planning day' is a valuable opportunity for governors and senior leaders to work in detail together and the governing body is exploring ways in which to extend its first-hand involvement with the school. Safeguarding arrangements are good and procedures to assure students' welfare at all times, including on trips and visits, are thorough. The school is a cohesive community that understands its socio-economic

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context particularly well. Although it provides a valuable international dimension to its work, the school recognises that more needs to be done to provide students with a greater understanding of religious, ethnic and cultural diversity both locally and across the United Kingdom.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

This is a satisfactory and improving sixth form. Students enter the sixth form with standards which are below those found nationally. They make satisfactory progress overall, but there remains some variation between different subject areas. Levels of attainment are rising as the proportion of good or better teaching is increasing. The school's robust procedure for tracking students' progress confirms that the large majority of students are currently on track to reach their target grades.

The sixth form is proving an increasingly popular choice for students as they finish compulsory schooling, and more than half of those students completing Year 11 last year at the school chose to continue their studies into Year 12. Students enjoy being in the sixth form and value the improved curriculum choices now on offer. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is satisfactory and improving. The vast majority of students know their target grades and many are provided with detailed written and oral feedback that helps them to improve. Students enjoy the range of opportunities through which they can become involved in the wider aspects of school life.

As a result of procedures to monitor the work of the sixth form, leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of provision. Self-evaluation is accurate and good plans are in place to bring about further improvement.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of questionnaire responses received from parents and carers was slightly lower than that normally seen for secondary schools. The very large majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire were pleased with their child's experience in the school, and felt they were well informed about their child's progress. A similar proportion expressed the view that the school is well led and managed and keeps their children safe. Concerns reported by parents and carers were investigated during the inspection and evidence confirmed the school is taking appropriate and effective action.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bedlingtonshire Community High 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 89 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 749 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	28	58	65	4	4	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	32	36	55	62	1	1	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	42	47	45	51	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	26	53	60	10	11	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	24	27	54	61	8	9	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	29	48	54	9	10	4	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	18	63	71	7	8	1	1
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)	35	39	47	53	5	6	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	28	52	58	12	13	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	27	48	54	9	10	5	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	26	45	51	8	9	6	7
The school is led and managed effectively	41	46	38	43	6	7	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	37	42	43	48	6	7	2	2

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



10 June 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Bedlingtonshire Community High School, Bedlington, NE22 7DS

You will remember that a team of inspectors and I inspected your school recently. We took careful note of the views that you expressed in our meetings with you and in the questionnaires that you completed for us.

We judged that the school is providing you with a satisfactory and rapidly improving standard of education. In your meetings with us, you said that you valued the caring and safe atmosphere that the school provides. We found that the school promotes these aspects well.

The attainment of students in Year 11 in 2010 was below the average normally seen in schools nationally, particularly in mathematics. However, during the inspection we found that the progress you are making in mathematics – and in many of your other subjects, particularly in science and in vocational courses – is improving. You told us that the quality of teaching has improved, that the curriculum offers you greater choice and that you value the individual support you receive in preparing for examinations. Through the school's specialism of mathematics and computing, a high proportion of you leave with valuable qualifications in ICT.

We have nevertheless asked school leaders and managers, and the governing body, to ensure that standards, including in mathematics and in the sixth form, continue to rise. We have also asked that the school continues to work with you and your families to promote the benefits of regular attendance. To improve the quality of teaching you receive still further, we have asked the school to ensure that all teaching regularly meets the needs of all students and provides frequent opportunities for you to be more actively involved in your learning. We have also asked that you receive more regular and useful feedback to help you to improve your work.

You can play your part in improving Bedlingtonshire Community High School by continuing to attend regularly, behaving well and working hard. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Lee Northern

Her Majesty's Inspector

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