

# George Stephenson High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108639
<b>Local authority</b>	North Tyneside
<b>Inspection number</b>	377790
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	John Paddick

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>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<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>	957
<b>Of which number on roll in the sixth form</b>	116
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Andrew Lynch
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ian Wilkinson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 February 2008
<b>School address</b>	Southgate Killingworth Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE12 6SA
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## Introduction

### Inspection team

John Paddick  
Catherine Laing  
Anne Smedley  
Patrick Hargreaves

Additional inspector  
Additional inspector  
Additional inspector  
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed parts of 41 lessons taught by 41 different teachers. Three of these were joint observations with the headteacher and senior staff. Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, the headteacher, members of staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, safeguarding policies, and the school's analysis of students' progress. They analysed 276 questionnaires from parents and carers, and others completed by staff and students.

## Information about the school

George Stephenson is an average-sized secondary school. Students are mostly of White British heritage. Few students are from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average and rising. There is a collaborative arrangement for sixth-form provision between George Stephenson and two other local secondary schools. The school meets the current floor standards which are the minimum standards expected by the government for students' 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>1</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>1</b>

## Key Findings

- George Stephenson is an outstanding school where students' attainment has risen rapidly to well above average levels in response to the vision and drive of a highly-committed and enthusiastic headteacher and his staff.
- Achievement is outstanding because students make excellent progress as they move through the school. When they join Year 7, their attainment is broadly average, yet in Years 10 and 11 they achieve well above average GCSE results. In the good sixth form, students achieve well and attainment is rising quickly. AS and A level pass rates are above average and the proportion of students gaining three A levels is one of the highest in the Tyneside area. However, there is still scope to improve attainment in a few sixth form subjects further.
- Students benefit from the exceptionally productive climate for learning that pervades the school and excellent teaching that enables them to make rapid progress. The extremely effective tracking system soon picks up any students who are not reaching their potential and triggers extra help for them. Teachers plan their lessons very well and use a wide range of techniques to move learning forward at a fast pace and develop students' independence.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Students respond exceptionally well to the adults who work with them and they trust them. They cooperate very well in class and behave in a very mature manner when they are socialising at breaks and lunchtimes. Students respond extremely well to the many opportunities that members of staff give them to take responsibility for their own learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Leadership and management of high quality at all levels have helped to design a very good curriculum which underpins the exceptional progress that students make. There is no complacency whatsoever because self-evaluation is very accurate and leads to development planning that is effective in underpinning a continuous drive for improvement, including in the quality of teaching.

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

- Improve achievement in the sixth form from good to outstanding to match the school's performance at GCSE by ensuring that there is always a good match between students' skills and abilities and the AS and A level courses that they choose to pursue.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Substantial rises in attainment over the last three years have led to the achievement of well above average GCSE results in most subjects. Inspectors' observations in class and scrutiny of students' work confirm that the school has secured these improvements and is in the process of very effectively upgrading results in sixth form subjects to similar levels. Current attainment in Years 9 and 11 is well above average, especially in English where students do particularly well in response to outstanding teaching. Students' reading and writing improve substantially because teachers in all subjects give them plenty of opportunities to research interesting topics and present their findings in a wide variety of imaginative written forms. The school rapidly identifies students who require extra help with their reading and provides effective extra support to enable them to catch up.

In 2011, the school achieved its best ever GCSE results. The high quality of these is reflected in the fact that almost a third of all entries resulted in A and A\* grades. Current attainment levels indicated by the school's very effective tracking system show a similarly very positive picture. Almost all groups of students make outstanding progress. This particularly applies to students who are disabled or special educational needs whose progress and GCSE results are exceptional. There has, however, been a gap between the GCSE performance of students known to be eligible for free school meals and that of other students, but it is closing rapidly in response to a very successful intervention programme. As GCSE results have risen, students starting in the sixth form have been increasingly well-equipped to begin AS and A level courses. As a consequence, current attainment in the sixth form is above average and rising quickly. However, there is still evidence of a very small number of students following courses that are too demanding for them.

Inspectors observed students consistently making at least good progress in lessons. Very frequently it was outstanding. This was because the overall profile of lessons was of high quality. Examples of outstanding achievement were evident in history and geography in Years 10 and 11, the school's specialist subjects. In Year 10, students were observed making rapid progress with an in-depth understanding of earthquakes. This also applied to a revision session on the state of the church in 1529 in Year 12. Stunning portrait work around the walls of the art room show that the Year 12 group is working at the highest AS level grades.

## Quality of teaching

Much of the teaching in most subjects is outstanding and at least consistently good. Parents, carers and students fully recognise this. Teachers have very high expectations of students of all abilities, which is reflected in the way that they plan for lessons. They use a wide variety of very effective teaching techniques which fully engage students throughout their lessons. Lessons frequently develop students' confidence and independence exceptionally well, especially when they are given the independence to tackle challenging activities. The teaching of students who are disabled or those who have special educational needs is of outstanding quality and enables them to do extremely well at GCSE. Class-management strategies are excellent, pace is consistently good and relationships with students are extremely productive. The use of classroom assistants always helps to promote rapid progress for the students with whom they work. Inspectors observed many outstanding lessons over two days. For example, in a high-quality Year 11 revision session in science, the teacher enabled students to develop and consolidate their use of language while they gained an excellent insight into GCSE grade criteria as they tackled practice questions on living organisms.

Teachers systematically and effectively check students' understanding throughout lessons. They give detailed and accurate feedback and ensure that students are aware of the next steps they should take to make further progress. The marking of students' work has improved substantially since the previous inspection. It is consistently good and frequently outstanding. Teachers give students plenty of opportunity to practise answering examination questions, and they always mark them in a way that shows students the grades they are working at and how to move to the next one.

## Behaviour and safety of students

The school manages the behaviour of students systematically and effectively. Records show that as the quality of teaching and rates of academic progress have increased over recent years, instances of unacceptable behaviour have fallen to a very low level. Typically, students conduct themselves exceptionally well, whether they are in lessons, walking from one room to another, using social areas or eating lunch. They are invariably polite and welcoming. Consequently, fixed-term exclusions are very low and there have been no permanent ones since the previous inspection. Members of staff have high expectations of students in terms of conduct and they are consistent in applying sanctions on the few occasions that they are necessary. Bullying and racist incidents are extremely rare. Students are confident that members of staff will always deal with them very effectively if they occur, and they are very knowledgeable of different types of bullying. Almost all parents, carers and students believe that the school tackles any incidents of unacceptable behaviour well.

The school provides students with an exceptionally safe and supportive environment for their education. Students say that they enjoy their education and recognise the quality of lessons they receive and the effort that members of staff put into them. They say that they feel safe in school and have an excellent understanding of risks to which they might be exposed. Considerable efforts are made to ensure that students attend school regularly. The effectiveness of these is reflected in the rise from

average to above average attendance. The school utilises the expertise of a range of professionals and agencies to provide extra support for pupils and assist them in removing barriers to academic progress and personal development.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher provides the school with exceptionally strong and effective leadership. He is very ably and willingly supported by fully committed and enthusiastic members of staff at all levels in the school. Since his arrival around three years ago, attainment, behaviour and the quality of teaching have improved substantially. Self-evaluation is accurate and informs excellent development planning that is perfectly clear about what is to be improved and how this is to be done. Rigorous monitoring and review ensure that targets are met or exceeded. Central to the school's relentless and effective focus on the quality of teaching is the restructuring of the school day to accommodate a weekly time allocation for staff debate and training on how to improve lessons. The school does not just target examination results and the quality of teaching. Superb planning ensures that students benefit from a very good curriculum, which caters very well for them as individuals, and which promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Very effective governance means that members of the governing body support the school wherever they can but also probe and challenge when they think that more can be done. As a result of all of these efforts students receive a first-class education.

Safeguarding procedures meet all requirements well. The site is secure and adults who have access to students are checked rigorously before they enter the school. An exceptionally strong commitment to equality of opportunity is reflected in the success that the school has in ensuring that all groups of students achieve as well as each other. For example, there is a fast-closing gap between the GCSE performance of students known to be eligible for free school meals and that of all other students. Where gaps in achievement are detected, the school provides extra help and can show that these gaps close very quickly. Issues from the previous inspection have been tackled very successfully. For example, the quality of teaching and the marking of students' work have improved substantially. These successes and the rapidly-rising attainment for students of all ages clearly indicate that the school has excellent capacity to secure further improvements and move forward again.

## 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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 up 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.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
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.**



16 May 2012

Dear Students

**Inspection of George Stephenson High School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne  
NE12 6SA**

Thank you for making the team so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. A particular 'thank you' goes to the students who filled in our questionnaire or met with us at lunchtime. We were extremely impressed by your attitudes to work and the exceptionally mature and sensible way that you conduct yourselves. We can tell that you are immensely proud of your excellent school.

We found that your school is providing you with an outstanding quality of education. It has improved quickly to the point that all groups of students are making at least good progress and many are doing much better than that. We found that your school provides you with an excellent climate for learning and outstanding teaching. This means that when you approach examinations, your teachers know how to prepare you to achieve at least good and frequently outstanding GCSE, AS and A-level results. Your school is led and managed exceptionally well so it continues to improve.

It can still improve further and we have asked the governing body, headteacher and staff to make an improvement to enable sixth form students do even better. This is to:

- tighten up entry requirements for some sixth form subjects so students do not embark upon courses that they are not properly equipped to tackle.

You can help by continuing with your excellent conduct and attitude to study.

With every best wish for the future.

Yours sincerely,

John Paddick  
Lead inspector

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