

# Wellfield Community School A Specialist Maths and Computing College

North Road East Wingate Co Durham TS28 5AX

**Inspection dates** 12–13 September 2012

|                                |                      |                      |          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory         | 3        |
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Inadequate</b>    | <b>4</b> |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Inadequate           | 4        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Inadequate           | 4        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | Requires improvement | 3        |
| Leadership and management      |                      | Requires improvement | 3        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that has serious weaknesses. It is not good because

- The achievement of a significant proportion of students is inadequate, especially in English and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching is too variable to promote consistently good progress. There is too much inadequate teaching because some staff do not have high enough expectations of what students, including those with special educational needs, can do.
- Behaviour and attitudes to learning are not yet consistently good.
- Members of the governing body do not have enough first-hand knowledge of the school to hold it fully to account.
- Attendance is below the national averages and there is a higher than average rate of persistent absence by some groups of students.
- There is not yet enough consistency of expertise and high expectation among middle leaders to ensure good progress in all subjects.

### The school has the following strengths

- The inspirational, ambitious and expert leadership of the recently appointed headteacher and the impact this is having on improving teaching.
- Evidence of recently improved attainment in GCSE examinations.
- The quality of teaching is improving rapidly because of robust monitoring and tackling weak performance. Over half the teaching seen during inspection was good.
- Senior staff provide strong leadership for change and improvement.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with half a day’s notice.
- Thirty lessons were observed, taught by 30 different teachers.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, members of the governing body and staff, and a telephone discussion was held with a member of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work, and looked at documentation including the school’s self-evaluation, improvement plans, monitoring records and analysis of students’ progress and performance and some samples of students’ work.
- There were four responses on Parent View.
- Fifty three staff questionnaires were returned, the views expressed were taken into account by inspectors.

## Inspection team

|                                   |                      |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Moira Fitzpatrick, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Graeme Clarke                     | Additional Inspector |
| Mark Simpson                      | Additional Inspector |

## Full report

*In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.*

### Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The number on roll has declined in recent years.
- Most students are of White British heritage and very few students speak English as an additional language.
- The percentage of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is twice the national average.
- The proportion of students supported by school action is well above average as is the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school hosts a unit for students with physical disabilities, all of whom are integrated with mainstream students for their lessons.
- The school meets current government floor standards, which set the minimum standards for attainment and progress.
- A monitoring visit by HMI in January 2012 judged the school to have made inadequate progress since its previous inspection.
- A new headteacher was appointed in January 2012.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to be consistently good or better by:
  - rapidly eliminating all inadequate teaching
  - improving the quality of all teaching to be at least good by the end of the school year
  - sharing the good practice that exists in the school so that weaker teachers learn from the most successful practitioners
  - ensure that all teachers have high expectations of what students can do and that they require them to work hard in lessons
  - improving teachers' use of assessment information and assessment methods during lessons so that all students are able to make good progress
  - ensure that teachers provide more frequent opportunities for active and independent learning so that students learn at their own best rate
  - ensure that the planning, resources and support provided for students who have special educational needs are tailored to match their capabilities and specific needs so that they enjoy learning and make the same progress as their peers
  - continuing to secure consistently good behaviour in lessons through close monitoring of students' views on learning in different subjects and taking action where it is needed.
- Raise students' attainment and achievement, especially in English and mathematics by:
  - accelerating progress in Key Stage 3 so that students are well prepared for the challenges of GCSE work
  - ensuring that work in these subjects is well matched to the needs of individuals in all classes, so that they make the progress of which they are capable and are not held back by

expectations that are too low.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - developing the skills and expertise of middle leaders to robustly and accurately monitor the performance of staff and students in their departments and take prompt and effective action to tackle weaknesses
  - identifying, analysing and collating the best practice in departments from which to develop consistent good practice
  - improving governors’ first-hand knowledge of the school so they are able to hold it more fully to account and play a more effective role in the school’s strategic development.
  
- Raise the attendance of the large groups of persistent absentees by continuing to develop ways of engaging these students in successful and enjoyable learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- While science results are now above the national average for two good GCSE passes, English and mathematics remain significantly below national averages at GCSE for the fifth successive year.
- There is a rising trend of attainment at GCSE. This year has seen significant improvement in science and mathematics, humanities and modern language subjects.
- The capped average point score for students' best eight GCSE passes when they leave the school is above the national average, indicating the effectiveness of the range of learning pathways in Key Stage 4.
- The proportion of students making the expected three levels progress is increasing, though it is still well below the national average in English and mathematics. Very few students exceed the expected level of progress, though this, too, is increasing.
- Intensive and highly effective interventions in mathematics since January have led to a significant improvement in the performance of students known to be eligible for free school meals and reflect the school's skilful use of pupil premium funding to raise the attainment of disadvantaged students.
- Across the school students' achievement is variable, with too much that is inadequate, because teaching is not yet consistently good. For many older students, there is a legacy of underachievement which is not being overcome quickly enough to allow them to make the progress of which they are capable. The school has recognised the need to accelerate progress at Key Stage 3, by making stronger links with primary schools to gather a secure understanding of their starting points when they enter Year 7.
- The high proportion of students who have special educational needs make inadequate progress either because the work they are set does not match their needs or they are not given enough support to overcome barriers to their learning.
- School data show that students who are physically disabled achieve well from their starting points. This is because they are well supported to overcome any barriers they may have to learning.

### The quality of teaching

### is inadequate

- In a fifth of lessons observed teaching was inadequate, leading to inadequate learning and progress for students. In such lessons teachers had not planned well to meet the different needs of students, so they were not supported appropriately or stretched in their learning, leading to inadequate achievement for a large minority.
- Some teachers talk for too long leaving no time for students to practise and consolidate new knowledge and skills. Students' interest wanes quickly; they become passive and bored. In some instances, students divert their energy into low-level chatter that is not checked and disrupts the work of others.
- The planning, learning resources and guidance provided for students with special educational needs do not ensure they make expected progress or enjoy their learning; too much teaching and learning is inadequate for these groups of students.
- Marking and feedback to students are inconsistent. Where they are good, students are clear about what they need to improve and are supported by teachers' comments to do this. In the best examples, teachers check on learning during lessons, picking up where students are struggling or where they need to move on to more challenging tasks. These prompt interventions ensure that time is well used so students make good progress and relish their learning because it brings success.

- Where teachers do not use effective assessment methods or fail to give supportive feedback, students lack direction and are unclear about the teachers' expectations. In these instances there is a gap between what students can do and what they actually achieve, because teachers' expectations are not based on robust and accurate knowledge of their capabilities.
- In over half the lessons seen teaching was good, leading to much improved learning and progress in a range of subjects.
- In good lessons students are actively involved in their learning through discussion and shared tasks. This accelerates their progress as they learn from each other and set a brisk pace to complete tasks in the time set. In the best examples, students have meaningful opportunities to apply and consolidate their new learning. They assess their own and others' learning regularly so they become adept at spotting where improvements are needed. This develops independent learning skills as students realise how best they learn and where they need to improve. An outstanding example was a Year 10 PE lesson where students made excellent progress using these skills to improve their performance.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

requires improvement

- Students' behaviour and attitudes for learning currently require improvement but are improving quickly as new behaviour management systems embed across the school. Older students comment that there is far less disruption to lessons than in the past and that this is helping them to enjoy their learning more. In an increasing number of lessons behaviour is good, supporting good progress. School surveys show that a very high proportion of students think that behaviour has improved a lot since the arrival of the new headteacher in January. Exclusions have declined rapidly since then.
- New systems for tracking patterns of behaviour that disrupt lessons is proving effective in identifying where problems occur so that senior leaders can take action to support staff to improve their behaviour management. Students, too, are receiving help to enable them to control their behaviour and take responsibility for their actions.
- Students' behaviour outside of lessons is calm and orderly. They show respect for themselves and adults, and are polite and helpful to visitors. New entrants this term comment on how this makes them feel safe and secure in the school.
- School surveys show that all students feel safe in school and trust adults to help if there are any issues with bullying. They understand the different forms that bullying might take, say that it does happen occasionally but that the school's systems quickly put a stop to it.
- Attendance is below the national average but beginning to improve for some groups as a result of more effective systems to follow up absence. However, there is still a much higher than average amount of persistent absence, linked to specific groups who do not find school life rewarding.
- In discussion, a number of students of different ages commented that they would welcome more opportunities to make a contribution to school life and that of the local community, indicating their increasing commitment to the school's developing ethos.

## The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher's accurate and astute evaluation of the school's effectiveness has provided the strong foundation for the school's rapid improvement. Her determined drive for improvement has won the support of staff and governors.
- Changes to the curriculum, behaviour management, staffing and leadership roles are all playing a part in improving outcomes for students. Though there is some way to go before these changes embed sufficiently to ensure good achievement for all students, staff morale is high as they see attainment rising and underachievement reducing.
- The curriculum has been revised. Changes are designed to meet the needs of all students by providing a range of pathways, including some vocational courses and alternative provision. At Key Stage 3 there is an increased emphasis on improving students' basic skills, especially in reading and communication.
- Weaknesses in teaching are being tackled through robust monitoring, training and individual action plans for teachers. Records show that the proportion of inadequate teaching is reducing rapidly, while the proportion of good is increasing.
- The work of senior managers and leaders is increasingly successful in raising students' aspirations, especially students whose behaviour has been a barrier to their achievement in the past, and in raising the attainment of students eligible for the pupil premium.
- Subject leadership is improving, guided by the clear expectations and whole-school systems of senior leaders. However, inconsistencies remain and senior leaders see further improvement to the quality and consistency of middle leadership as central to accelerating the school's improvement. Further training and development of middle leaders are planned for this term.
- The headteacher and senior leaders are dealing swiftly and effectively with a legacy of underachievement and weak teaching. They are clearly demonstrating the capacity to continue to improve the school. The local authority has provided good support with consultants advising the English and mathematics departments this year. It, too, is confident that the school is capable of leading rapid improvement from within its own resources.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body has played an increasing role in the school's improvement since the start of 2012 by tackling the issues of over-staffing and weak teaching. Their work in this area has helped the school strengthen its teaching force and become more cost effective with staffing. Monitoring and review of teachers' performance is now shared with governors so they are better informed about the quality of provision in the school.
  - Members of the governing body do not yet have enough first-hand knowledge of the school's work to hold it robustly to account, because they have only recently become involved in direct monitoring and evaluation.
  - However, since the headteacher took up post, governors have improved their knowledge and skills, for example in analysing examination data. They have planned a programme of monitoring activities in order to gain first-hand knowledge of the school's work, so that they can play a full part in its strategic development.
  - The school takes a rigorous approach to safeguarding. Records are thorough and comply with requirements.

## 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

|                                |        |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 114415 |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Durham |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 401424 |

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

|  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Secondary                       |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community                       |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 11–16                           |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                           |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 535                             |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body              |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Mrs Ann Wilson                  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Mrs Linda Rodham                |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 21 January 2010                 |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01429 838413                    |
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