

Norham High School

Alnwick Avenue, North Shields, Tyne and Wear, NE29 7BU

Inspection dates 14–15 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although GCSE results have improved considerably in recent years, they remain below average. Too few students achieve an A*/A grade.
- The rate of progress students make is better than it was when the school was last inspected but it is still not good. Not enough students make as much progress as they do in other schools. This applies to the most-able students, the girls, and some students who have special educational needs.
- Because teaching is largely designed to help students improve their performance in examinations, some of it is a little dull and uninspiring.
- Governors work hard to support the school, but some play a more active part than others. The governing body is understrength. In particular, it does not have enough parents.
- Some staff in charge of subjects are less effective in the role than others.

The school has the following strengths

- The dynamic leadership of the new headteacher has stimulated significant improvements in the quality of teaching and in students' progress.
- Teachers are skilled in preparing students for GCSE and other qualifications.
- The school uses several partner organisations well. This enables it to offer students a wide range of courses.
- Students' behaviour is good. They want to do well in lessons and work hard. They behave sensibly around the building at all times.
- Students feel safe and well cared for.
- Students based in the centre for language and communication difficulties make good progress because of the expert support they get.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 29 lessons. These included three joint observations with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors held meetings with: three groups of students; with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors; with school staff, including senior and middle managers; and with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including the school's self-evaluation summary, development plan and assessment information.
- They analysed 39 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and questionnaires returned by school staff.

Inspection team

Derek Neil, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jim Bradley

Additional Inspector

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Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Norham High School, which has recently changed its name from Norham Community Technology College, is a smaller-than-average secondary school.
- Most students are White British.
- A high proportion of the students are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of students identified with special educational needs through school action is well above average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school has a centre for students who have language and communication difficulties including some who are autistic. Currently it provides support for 25 students.
- The school has had full extended school status since 2008.
- It has a number of awards including the Healthy Schools Award and the International School Award.
- It meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Several students receive all or part of their education with alternative providers. These are: Pals; Barnado's; the YMCA; TyneMet College; the Skills and Enterprise Centre; the Barn; Northumbria Youth Action; Trax; and Moorbridge. A small number attend a nearby centre owned and staffed by the school.
- Since the previous inspection, when an acting headteacher was in post, a permanent headteacher has been appointed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - making sure work is hard enough for the most-able students
 - making more lessons imaginative and exciting
 - ensuring all teachers mark students' work in a way that helps them to improve.
- Raise attainment by:
 - finding ways to accelerate the progress of the most able, the girls, and those students with special educational needs who are not yet making the progress they are capable of
 - improving the writing skills of those students who need extra help with this
 - encouraging students to read more out of school for pleasure and interest.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - recruiting more parents to the governing body
 - continuing to develop the skills of teachers who are in charge of subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Examination results are slightly below average but much higher than they have been in the past.
- These better results are the consequence of the school's drive to improve the rate at which students make progress. Progress is now more rapid than it was but is still some way short of what students manage in other schools.
- The school enters students for GCSE in several subjects before the end of Year 11. Staff believe this has contributed to better results. There is no evidence that the practice has limited the grades students get as they all can re-sit the examinations.
- Some of the students who have special educational needs, girls, and the most-able students do not make enough progress. The school is aware of this and is working hard to rectify the matter.
- Disabled students and those with language and communication difficulties make good progress. They get expert help in the specialist centre and are successfully integrated into lessons in the main part of the school.
- The school gives students extra help to improve their reading skills where necessary. Many reach a point where they can cope well with school work, but others have some way to go. Few students read much at home for their own pleasure. They show little interest in books.
- When students start the school some of them find writing difficult. Their spelling, punctuation and handwriting spoil their work. The school has concentrated recently on improving students' reading skills. It recognises that it now needs to do more to improve their writing.
- Students listen attentively to the teacher and work hard. They ask the teacher for help when they need it, but do not show much independence or initiative. For example, in one lesson students dutifully copied definitions from a dictionary without fully understanding what they were writing.
- In lessons where the content is interesting, students respond with enthusiasm. In more humdrum lessons they sometimes get bored. While boys take an active part in lessons, at times the girls are a little passive.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Lessons are designed to improve students' skills for attaining good results in tests and examinations. Teachers carefully identify the skills needed to get good grades and explain these clearly. They plan activities that give students lots of practice in those important skills.
- Relationships are very good. Teachers use praise effectively to encourage students and to build up their confidence. They make sure students behave well and pay attention. Staff speak respectfully to students when asking them to do something and students reciprocate that respect.
- Some teachers ask questions very effectively to help students make progress. For example, in one lesson the teacher asked questions like, 'What effect might this sentence have upon the reader?' This invited students to think more deeply about the text they were analysing.
- Many lessons have a variety of different tasks, so students are busy all the time. As soon as students finish one exercise, and sometimes before they finish, they are given another.
- In some classes the teacher gives the most able work that is more demanding. For example, in a Year 9 lesson about the First World War some groups evaluated a photograph, while the most able considered a difficult poem by Wilfred Owen. In other classes, however, the most able are not given work that makes the most of their potential.
- Some lessons are a little dull. Activities are designed to improve students' skills but not to excite them or to stimulate a love of the subject. Students told inspectors they would like lessons to be more interesting.
- Teachers assess students' progress regularly. They use this information to plan how to help

students improve. Some teachers mark students' work frequently and point out what they have done well and what could be better. Other teachers do not do this so well. In some instances, exercise books are marked rarely or not at all. Too often, technical errors in students' writing, such as their spelling and handwriting, pass without comment.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students behave well in class and around the school. They are sensible as they move along the corridors. They play enthusiastically but not dangerously at break and lunch time.
- Students feel safe in school. They appreciate the site's security. They report there are no areas where they are afraid to go. Students who are new to the school say they settle very quickly and do not feel intimidated by the older students.
- Bullying is rare. When it occurs it is dealt with in the right way by staff. School records indicate very few racist incidents and that the school deals with them robustly.
- The good behaviour is due to the school's highly effective approach. Staff use a system of rewards and punishments that students understand and accept. A very small number of students get their lessons away from the main site, some in the school's nearby centre, some in venues run by other organisations. This works well. It enables students to improve their behaviour and to make progress in their learning in a way that might not otherwise have been possible.
- Attendance, regularly a little below average, slumped considerably recently. However, the school tackled the problem energetically and imaginatively. The employment of staff dedicated to raising attendance, improvements to the curriculum, and judicious use of different centres all contributed to a significant rise last year. Further improvement has already been recorded this year.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The dynamic leadership of the new headteacher, supported by a dedicated and enthusiastic senior team, has brought about significant improvements in the quality of teaching, in attendance and in the rate at which students make progress.
- These improvements are well grounded in a number of new systems. These systems support the way staff assess students' work, the way they plan lessons, and the way they accept responsibility for the progress students make. The changes have been fully accepted by staff, who understand the reasons for them and are committed to making them work.
- Senior leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses extremely well. They can pinpoint where teaching is good and where it needs to improve. Their plans for improving the school are based on a comprehensive understanding of what needs to happen next. For example, they know that not enough students get an A*/A grade at GCSE and are taking steps to deal with this.
- The number of students on roll has fallen considerably of late. This is partly due to a decline in the local population. The resulting reduction in the budget has been problematic but well managed. Despite a loss of staff, the quality of the curriculum, of teaching and of resources has been largely unaffected.
- The school uses its pupil-premium funding very effectively. Leaders have clear evidence that those students for whom it was intended have higher attainment and better attendance as a consequence of the curriculum improvements and the additional staff it has paid for. For example, the average point score for these students rose by over five points in 2012 in English and mathematics, while for others it rose by about two points.
- Leaders take performance management very seriously. The arrangements for identifying strengths and weaknesses in staff's teaching have contributed to recent improvements. There are good and improving opportunities for staff to develop their skills. Many staff are set clear and demanding targets for the progress their classes should make. Weaker team leaders are less good at this and the targets they set are too woolly. The headteacher knows this process should

be used to determine which staff get a pay rise though this did not always happen in the past.

- The school promotes equality of opportunity and combats discrimination and prejudice vigorously. Leaders recognise the need to get girls to be more ambitious. Students in the communications and languages centre are often well integrated in main school lessons.
- The wide range of other places where students get their lessons enables the school to provide a more suitable curriculum for those who need a different sort of experience from what they get on the main site. These alternatives work well for these students, many of whom have improved their progress, their behaviour and their attendance.
- The local authority knows the school well. It provides well-judged and highly valued support for the school and has contributed significantly to recent improvements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well informed about the school. They know where improvements have been made and where further work is needed. They have a sound understanding of how performance management has contributed to better teaching and achievement. They have undertaken training which enables them to understand information about examination results. They get reports about the school from senior staff, for example, how the pupil premium is allocated and the difference it is making. They recognise that some governors are more active than others. The governing body is understrength; it has a number of vacancies for parent governors.

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

Unique reference number	108628
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	405185

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	462
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Newsham
Headteacher	Tracy Hush
Date of previous school inspection	23 September 2010
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