

Kingsmeadow Community Comprehensive School

Market Lane, Dunston, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE11 9NX

Inspection dates 23–24 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Achievement is not yet consistently good. In the recent past, too few students have done as well as they could given their starting points.
- The more able and talented students do not achieve as well as they could, especially in mathematics. The proportion of students attaining higher grades of A* and A in GCSE examinations is below the national average.
- Not enough lessons are inspiring and thought-provoking enough and students are sometimes too dependent on the teacher.
- Teaching does not yet always provide enough challenge in lessons to ensure a consistent pattern of good progress for all groups of students, including those eligible for pupil premium funding.
- There has not always been a relentless focus on students' achievement when judging the quality of teaching and learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Students' progress is accelerating and achievement is improving. Teaching is improving in most subjects.
- It is an extremely caring school that warmly welcomes students from all backgrounds. All students settle happily and all are made to feel very welcome by a very committed staff.
- Behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Older students demonstrate high levels of courtesy and respect and are very positive towards school. Attendance is good.
- Governance is a strength of the school.
- The headteacher leads the school with passion and has high ambitions for the school and students' achievement. Weaknesses in some subject areas are being tackled effectively.
- The school provides an interesting curriculum which develops students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Excellent provision is made for their personal development.
- Lower-ability students attain much higher standards in GCSE at this school than nationally.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 31 lessons. Six of these lessons were observed alongside senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons, conducted walks around the college site to check the quality of what is provided for students and listened to students read.
- Inspectors held discussions with students, parents, members of the governing body, school staff, including senior leaders and those with responsibilities (such as the leadership of subjects), the local authority link adviser and the school’s development partner.
- Inspectors took account of the 27 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and examined a range of documentation including the school’s own records of students’ current progress, records from the observation of lessons, students’ books and the school’s improvement planning. Records relating to behaviour, complaints and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding were also taken into consideration.

Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Shirley Fall	Additional Inspector
Barbara Waugh	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Kingsmeadow is a smaller than average sized secondary school which has specialist business and enterprise status.
- The proportion of students eligible for pupil premium funding (which is provided by the government to support the learning of pupils who are known to be entitled to free school meals, in the care of the local authority or the children of members of the armed forces) is twice the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is marginally above average.
- Almost all pupils are White British. Very few are from minority ethnic groups, with none at an early stage of learning to speak English. A higher than average number of students arrive and leave at other than the normal times.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Seven Year 11 students attend local authority Youth and Community off-site alternative provision five days each week.
- The Beehive Out of School Club and the Long Life Learning Centre, a community primary school and a sixth-form centre are located on the site but not managed by the governing body. All are subject to a separate inspection and will receive their own report which will be published on the Ofsted website.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that more teaching is inspiring and exciting and reduce the amount that requires improvement by:
 - adopting thought-provoking methods that spark students' imagination and increase the level of challenge in lessons
 - ensuring that more is expected of students of all abilities, in particular those of higher ability
 - using a wider range of high-quality questioning, closely matched to students' varied abilities, to stretch their knowledge and understanding continuously
 - making certain that all students are provided with well defined steps to enable them to improve quickly.
- Raise standards further, particularly in mathematics, to help students make rapid and sustained progress by:
 - extending the opportunities in all subjects for students to practise their literacy skills
 - increasing students' confidence to work by themselves, think critically, analyse problems and fully explain their ideas or solutions
 - using the available rich learning opportunities to build upon prior knowledge and skills at a faster rate, especially for the higher-ability students
 - ensuring all teachers promote high-quality presentation and layout of students' work
 - making certain that leaders always have a sharp focus on each student's achievement when judging the quality of teaching.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Rates of progress and achievement suffered a dip in 2012 despite the increase in the proportion of students gaining five A* to C grades and lower-ability students appreciably exceeding the standards expected of them. The slip was largely the result of a much higher number of students joining the school part-way through Key Stage 4. Current school information, confirmed by observation of lessons and students' work, shows that progress is now faster and similar to the accelerating pattern in 2011.
- Students enter school with skills that are below average, although literacy and students' social and emotional development vary year on year. Those Year 11 students who left in 2012 made gains which were similar to those found in other schools nationally. However, except in English Literature and Spanish, too few higher-ability students exceeded what was expected of them. Standards in English were higher than in mathematics. Positive action has been taken to ensure that all students achieve at least in line with expectations, especially in mathematics.
- Students are entered early for GCSE examinations at various points from Year 9 onwards. It provides the opportunity for students to attain well and gain early confidence. However, opportunities are missed to add to their skills at a faster rate before entry. In English Literature and Spanish the number of students achieving A* to C grades is significantly higher than average. Yet, not enough students attain similar grades in other subjects.
- Increasingly effective use is made of additional funding to close the achievement gap between students supported by the pupil premium and other students, although eligible students remain a grade behind in English and more than grade behind in mathematics. Successful action using available funding has been taken to improve reading and mathematics in Year 7. Consequently, gaps are closing steadily.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs do not always do as well as others in the school because, too often, activities are not closely enough matched to their abilities and needs. However, staffing arrangements have been recently changed and the quality of intervention and support is now increasingly more effective.
- Students in Year 7 who arrive with low reading ages are quickly identified. An enjoyment of reading is being fostered well, with an increasing number of students having impressive gains in their reading ages to reach expected levels for their age.
- The small numbers of students that are educated off site attend regularly, enjoy their practically based learning and gain valuable accreditation which meets their needs.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There was some good teaching seen during inspection, but a significant proportion was seen to require improvement. No teaching was inadequate. The students' work and school data over time confirm this judgement.
- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and organise activities well and safely, such as in science when illustrating the impact of placing potassium into water. Despite this, teachers often provide students with learning that is insufficiently thought-provoking and challenging across the range of abilities within each class. This results in the pace of learning being variable, especially for higher-ability students.
- When progress is quickest and achievement highest, teachers:
 - set high expectations for what students of all abilities can achieve
 - use activities that are closely matched to individual abilities and interests
 - allow students to work independently and exchange ideas or solve problems with a partner
 - question students constantly to check and test their knowledge and understanding and stretch

their thinking.

■ Where teaching requires improvement:

- expectations of what students of all abilities can achieve are not demanding enough
- students are too dependent upon the teacher and methods lack the vitality to create and hold interest
- questioning does not probe understanding or provoke sufficient thought
- marking does not provide concise, well defined steps for improvement.

■ When achievement is higher, such as in history, thought-provoking teaching constantly challenges students' thinking. For example, a class of older students was seen totally absorbed in discussing the issues that led to the improvements in life chances of Black Americans. Skilful questioning by the teacher teased out their views and helped students judge the quality of their work.

■ Most teachers regularly mark students' work, but not all marking ensures that they are aware of how well they are doing against their targets. Good opportunities are occasionally provided for students to assess each other's work. Too much work is incomplete and lacks accuracy and refinement in layout and presentation in many subjects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good and sometimes exemplary. Social areas and classrooms are calm and friendly places. Consequently, students feel safe and enjoy school. Almost all parents agree. Students get on well with each other and new arrivals settle quickly and confidently in the happy, welcoming atmosphere.
- In conversations students speak of incidents of inappropriate behaviour in lessons being very few. Their relationships with staff are often excellent and this results from the highly positive staff role models. Students report that staff are always on hand to share a worry or concern and resolve any difficulties they may have.
- Students are well informed about the different types of bullying and know how to keep themselves safe and avoid danger and risk, such as when using new technology. Those students whose individual circumstances might place them at risk are managed skilfully and sensitively. Parents particularly appreciate how really well their children are looked after.
- Many opportunities are given to students to develop their personal skills by getting involved in school life. Students particularly appreciate the rich and interesting range of extra-curricular activities, such as rowing with a local club and playing in a steel band. They respond very well to the meaningful rewards system provided for them to celebrate their achievements.
- Attendance is broadly average and continues to improve. School gives a high priority to working with students and their families to encourage regular attendance and reduce absence.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the previous inspection senior leaders have maintained a firm focus on helping students make faster progress and achieve more highly. They have been instrumental in creating a positive climate in which students from all starting points can achieve success.
- Good procedures are in place for checking the quality of the school's work, although the judgements made are occasionally marginally generous. Correct priorities are identified in the continuous drive for improvement and senior leaders have a clear view of the further improvements required. Subject leaders provide increasingly purposeful leadership in their areas of responsibility, checking the quality of learning.
- The quality of teaching is frequently monitored by senior leaders. This includes lesson observations and departmental reviews supported by local authority and other specialists.

Training programmes are closely linked to the development points arising from lesson monitoring. Effective support plans are established when teaching requires improvement.

- During joint observations with inspectors senior leaders made the same judgements in almost all lessons. Nevertheless, in their feedback to staff they sometimes gave insufficient emphasis to the effectiveness of students' learning.
- The good curriculum is well matched to the abilities, needs and interests of the students. Interesting learning opportunities are sometimes missed to build upon their earlier attainment more rapidly, especially for those higher-ability students entered early for examinations. Good and sometimes excellent opportunities are provided for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school works extremely hard to ensure every student can achieve success and fulfil their potential. Any form of discrimination is not tolerated by the students or the school. A parent's remark, 'the school has made my son', sums up the views of many.
- Systems to manage the performance of staff are correctly linked to school priorities and the current teaching standards. Targets for improvement are closely linked to incentives and rewards. Those teachers in training at the school are well supported.
- Partnership working is a strength and this includes a close working relationship with local authority specialists and the local network of schools. The school also enjoys the confidence and trust of parents.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements, with much best practice underpinning the high quality of care and support provided for students. For example, child-protection procedures are robust.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The strong governing body demonstrates an accurate grasp of current school performance, including the quality of teaching and learning. Governors are rigorous when challenging and holding the school to account. The governing body is aware of how the school spends its pupil premium funding and is mindful of the importance of maximising its impact. Recent training and local authority briefings ensure governors have a confident grasp of school performance information. They ensure that teachers' performance management is effective. Governance is now very effective.

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	108410
Local authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	412795

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	594
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lilian Mains
Headteacher	Barbara Rouse
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2010
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