

Netherthorpe School

Ralph Road, Staveley, Chesterfield, S43 3PU

Inspection dates 1–2 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students achieve well during their time at school and attain above-average standards in most subjects at GCSE.
- The sixth form is good. The large majority of students make good progress and move on to training or higher education.
- There have been significant improvements in the behaviour and attendance of students. Students' behaviour is good and they feel very safe in the school.
- There are successful procedures for tracking students' achievement and providing additional support where it is needed for them to achieve well.
- The quality of teaching is good so that most students achieve well during their time at school.
- The school organises a range of extra activities and outside visits which greatly increase students' enjoyment and experience of school.
- The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and senior leaders are driving improvements in the quality of teaching and the achievement of the students.
- Governors are effective in holding the school to account for students' achievement and the quality of teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Leaders do not give teachers enough opportunity to share the best practice in teaching and learning in the school.
- Insufficient support is provided for boys across all subjects to develop their confidence in writing.
- Not all teachers use questioning effectively in lessons to engage and challenge students.
- Teachers' performance targets are insufficiently focused on students achieving even higher standards.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 37 lessons, four of which were seen together with senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, other senior leaders, staff and groups of students.
- Inspectors took account of the 48 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire and the 77 responses from the staff questionnaire distributed for the inspection.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the school’s analysis of its own strengths and weaknesses, the school development plan, the system to track students’ achievement, and records relating to behaviour and attendance. They also looked at records of lesson observations by senior staff, information about teachers’ performance, safeguarding documentation and a sample of students’ work.

Inspection team

Stephen Walker, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Robin Fugill	Additional Inspector
Harkireet Sohel	Additional Inspector
Rosemary Myers	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Netherthorpe School converted to become an academy school in March 2012 and is run by the Netherthorpe Education Trust. When its predecessor school, Netherthorpe School and Science Specialist College, was last inspected by Ofsted in 2009, it was judged to be good overall.
- The site of the school is owned by a charitable trust which is overseen by the endowment governors.
- The school is larger than the average secondary school.
- The school serves the local town and a large surrounding area in North East Derbyshire.
- The additional new buildings for the school were completed in July 2012 through the Building Schools for the Future programme. The rest of the school has been extensively refurbished, including some heritage buildings which date back to the 16th century.
- The large majority of students are from White British backgrounds.
- An average proportion of students are supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in local authority care, students from armed services families and students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportions of disabled students and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is broadly average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A small number of Key Stage 4 students take work-related courses at Chesterfield College and other training providers.
- The school has received the International Schools Award and Careers Mark.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding and never less than consistently good across the school so that students achieve even better by:
 - providing additional support for boys across all subject areas so that they are more confident in their writing
 - training teachers to use questioning more effectively to engage students, check their understanding and challenge them in their learning
 - making sure that teachers' performance targets are always sharply focused on students achieving the highest standards of which they are capable
 - creating more opportunities for coaching and sharing outstanding practice in teaching and learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students achieve well during their time at school. There is a substantial trend of improvement in students' standards and achievement across the school, particularly in examinations in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.
- Students make a good start in Key Stage 3, where there is a strong emphasis on developing the basic skills in a range of subjects. Students start many of their GCSE courses in Year 9, which greatly improves their engagement and motivation. The school effectively uses additional reading sessions, for students targeted for the Year 7 catch-up programme, to improve their reading ages.
- Almost all students gain at least five A* to G grades at GCSE and 64% of students gained five A* to C grades including English and mathematics in 2012, which represents good achievement for the vast majority of students, who sustain their good achievement at entry throughout the whole school. Data tracking the present Year 11's performance shows continuing improvement and most subjects are on track to attain above-average standards. The school is very active in supporting the small minority of students who are at risk of underachieving and enables them to achieve well.
- Good teaching is leading to well-above average standards in mathematics, where increasing numbers of students are achieving exceptionally well. The school's policy to enter a small number of students early in GCSE mathematics is effective as it allows them to spend more time on other subjects or continue to study mathematics at a higher level if they gain their target grade. An increasing number of students are exceeding expectations in English, although last year a number of average-ability boys made less-than-expected progress in this subject, particularly in writing. Some boys do not regularly write extensively in different subjects.
- Most subjects are supporting the improvements in the school with particularly good progress in design and technology, information communication technology, physical education and science. The school is addressing lower achievement in modern foreign languages, and there is convincing evidence of better progress in Spanish during the current year. Students who take alternative provision through work-related courses off site benefit from the practical approach they receive and make good progress to achieve well.
- There has been a similar trend of improvement in the sixth form. Students are, currently, achieving well in most AS and A level subjects, as well as in work-related courses. The school is now more active in advising students to select the most appropriate courses in the sixth form so that there is, usually, a high completion rate in most AS- and A-level subjects. The large majority of students move on to training and higher education. Predictions for the current year suggest that more students are on track to attain A* to B grades than in previous years, although few start their courses with significantly above-average prior GCSE attainment.
- Most disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress and achieve well. This is because highly effective work from other adults helps them take a full part in lessons with the other students, as well as proving additional support in small groups.
- The school is using additional funding effectively to narrow the identified gap between the attainment in English and mathematics of students eligible for the pupil premium and other students in the school. Money is allocated for following up any absences of these students and extra teaching time for additional help in reading, writing and mathematics. Data tracking the performance of the present Year 11 students shows the gap between their attainment and that of

other students is narrowing and that more of these students are on track to gain higher grades in GCSE subjects.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in most classes is good, with examples of some outstanding teaching. As a result, most students achieve well and reach above-average standards over their time at school. The vast majority of parents and carers say that their children are taught well, and students agree.
- Teachers plan lessons that usually involve a range of interesting activities so that students normally display enthusiasm and sustain high levels of concentration. Displays in classrooms provide a stimulating environment for learning and celebrate students' work.
- Students learn well because the activities chosen by teachers are normally well matched to students' different abilities. Teachers are conscientious in their planning of lessons to make sure that the tasks are achievable but sufficiently challenging for each student.
- Teachers encourage students to work independently and in small groups, which greatly support their understanding of work as well as developing their listening and speaking skills. Teaching assistants are used well to support students who require additional help with their work.
- There are good examples of marking across the school which commend good work but also show students how to remedy any weaknesses. Many teachers are encouraging students to assess each other's work, which helps them to improve it and gain a greater appreciation of the marking schemes in examinations.
- Teachers have been active in encouraging reading and comprehension across all subject areas. However, a number of students, particularly boys, are not given enough help in lessons to support them with their writing, particularly when they are required to answer questions in detail. Teachers are not always challenging boys enough to improve their writing and their presentation of written work in different subjects. Consequently, some boys lack confidence in using written language.
- Some teachers use questioning well to encourage students to think more deeply about their learning. However, the use of questioning to engage the students, check understanding and challenge them to develop further their understanding is not consistently effective. Teachers sometimes do the problem solving for the students and do not give them enough time to answer questions.
- Outstanding teaching is seen when teachers challenge students with high-quality questioning and tasks as well as encouraging them to take greater responsibility for their own learning. For example, Year 7 students were set the challenging task of demonstrating the features of Elizabethan theatre through group productions. Rapid learning took place as all students were fully engaged in the lesson and there was shared enjoyment and delight in the learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' behaviour is good in lessons and around the school, and contributes to a calm and orderly environment. Students consistently meet the school's clear expectations of behaviour. Parents, carers and students confirm that there has been a considerable improvement in behaviour over the last two years.
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- Students want to do well and are eager to improve their work and gain the higher grades. They respond well to teachers' high expectations for both work and behaviour. Good relationships among teachers and students provide a purposeful atmosphere for learning.
- Students are developing their skills in managing their own behaviour and can be trusted to move around the school and socialise at break and lunchtime with only moderate supervision. Any incidents of misbehaviour or disengagement from school are addressed quickly and successfully and students are well supported in resolving issues and making a fresh start.
- Most students are considerate, polite and courteous to staff and each other and this has a very positive effect on learning. The house system helps younger students fit into the school quickly and feel welcomed by the other students. Sixth formers act as good role models and have opportunities to support the younger students by helping in tutor groups and acting as 'peer counsellors'.
- Students are very aware of the different forms of possible bullying such as cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying related to sex, gender, race and disability. Although bullying of any kind is extremely rare, students, parents and carers say any unkind behaviour, such as name calling, is dealt with quickly and effectively.
- The school makes every effort to ensure students are safe and secure. Students display a good understanding of the issues relating to safety. They talk confidently about how they would keep themselves safe in a variety of situations such as using the internet and talking to strangers. They confirmed that the school had provided them with helpful information on sex education and the dangers of smoking, alcohol and drugs.
- Leaders have introduced effective strategies to improve attendance and reduce persistent absences. Attendance is now broadly average and most students enjoy coming to the school. All students adhere to the smart uniform regulations and the vast majority are very proud of their school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is providing strong and effective leadership, which is driving improvements in the behaviour, attendance and achievement of the students. He is well supported by the senior leadership team, which is overseeing improvement in the school.
 - The school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. The school development plan indicates priorities and targets that are focused on improvement in the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
 - Senior leaders have introduced rigorous systems for improving teaching, and this is proving successful in promoting the, currently, better progress of the students. The school is active in ensuring that the systems to track how well students are doing spot all students who need extra help and make sure that appropriate extra support is provided for them.
 - There are regular lesson observations by senior staff which provide clear feedback to teachers on strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders' judgements on the quality of teaching are accurate and focus on improving students' learning and achievement.
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- The system of setting performance targets for teachers is effective in ensuring that teachers are held to account for the students' achievement. However, teachers' performance targets are not fully focused on the proportion of students expected to achieve even higher standards, so that their currently good achievement rises to outstanding quality.
 - Professional development for teachers and support staff is effective in making them reflect on their practice. The vast majority of staff are committed to the further improvement and continued success of the school. However, leaders do not take enough advantage of the outstanding practice in the school by creating sufficient opportunities for coaching and sharing this excellent practice.
 - The Netherthorpe Education Trust is very supportive and works closely with the senior leaders. The trust liaises very effectively with the endowment governors, as seen particularly during the recent building programme.
 - The school provides an appropriate curriculum, which is relevant to students' interests and learning needs and gives them a good range of activities. A range of outside visits provides effective extension of the work in lessons, as do the large number of activities beyond the school timetable, which greatly increase students' enjoyment and experience of school.
 - The broad range of learning opportunities contribute well to students' achievements and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The International Schools Award acknowledges links with overseas schools and the school is developing students' understanding of the many cultures in modern society.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well informed about the school's progress and areas for development. Its members are fully involved in monitoring achievement and in holding the leaders and staff to account for the quality of education provided. Governors are presently reviewing tenders from external consultants to support them in their monitoring role. They have been very active in supporting the transition to academy status and overseeing the development of the new buildings. Governors have a good understanding of the data describing students' achievement compared with schools locally and nationally. They know what the quality of teaching is across the school. They make confident decisions on salary progression based on the information available to them on students' achievement and attainment. Robust procedures for safeguarding meet statutory requirements and underpin the school's caring approach. Governors are proactive in overseeing the use of the pupil premium funding and ensure that it is effectively spent to support eligible students.
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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	137902
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	412836

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1095
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	263
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Hendley
Headteacher	Alan Senior
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01246 472220
Fax number	01246 471118
Email address	info@netherthorpe.derbyshire.sch.uk

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