

Cramlington Learning Village

Highburn, Cramlington, Northumberland, NE23 6BN

Inspection dates 1–2 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Students receive an outstanding, all-round education at Cramlington Learning Village and this prepares them extremely well for the future.
- Most groups of students make outstanding progress and leave at the end of Year 11 with attainment that is above that found nationally. Achievement in science, the school's specialism, is particularly impressive.
- Previous relative underachievement in some subjects has been tackled very effectively and rapid improvement has occurred.
- The effectiveness of the sixth form has improved considerably and is outstanding.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers have expert subject knowledge and provide challenging and sometimes innovative activities that involve students well and make them want to learn.
- Students' work is marked well, giving them some very helpful advice on how to improve their work. There are some outstanding examples of students being encouraged to respond to such comments, but this practice is not as widespread as it could be.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding. Their attitude to learning is first class and makes a huge contribution to their successful learning. Very occasionally, students' progress is limited because they are not given enough opportunities to find out things by themselves.
- The quality of leadership and management, including governance is outstanding. The headteacher delegates responsibility well and leaders at all levels play a large part in the success of the school.
- There is a relentless focus on improving students' achievement and the quality of teaching, which has been most successful.
- The school places great stress on learning as an activity to be valued and enjoyed. As a result, students are very much partners in their own learning.
- Students and staff are extremely proud of the school. This is illustrated by comments such as, 'The school is passionate about us as individuals' from a student, and, 'I feel privileged to work with such fantastic staff and more importantly fantastic students' from a member of staff.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 42 lessons, taught by 42 teachers. Four observations were conducted jointly with four members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspectors observed the academy’s work and looked at a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection, development planning, the monitoring of the quality of teaching and also information about teachers’ professional development.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteachers, other members of the senior leadership team and a group of leaders in charge of subjects. A meeting was held with the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor who was the previous Chair of the Governing Body, both of whom are trustees of the academy.
- A telephone discussion was held with an external consultant who works with the academy.
- The inspectors spoke to many students in lessons, at breaks and at lunchtimes. They also spoke formally to five groups of students on the first day of the inspection.
- The 38 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the 59 responses to the staff questionnaire were analysed.

Inspection team

Alison Thomson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sheila Kaye

Additional Inspector

Catherine Laing

Additional Inspector

Colin Scott

Additional Inspector

Barbara Waugh

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Cramlington Learning Village is much larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Cramlington Learning Village converted to an academy in September 2011. At the time of its last inspection in February 2009, the predecessor school was judged to be outstanding.
- The academy has retained its original name, with the leaders wishing to continue to be known as headteacher and deputy headteachers, rather than Principal and vice-principals.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students who are supported at school action is below average. The proportion of students supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is higher than average. (This is funding available for students known to be eligible for free school meals, students in local authority care and those whose parents are in the armed forces). The school has a number of looked after students and a large group of students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- A very few students are currently educated off-site at local authority's Education Other than at School (EOTAS) service.
- The school enters students early for some GCSEs.
- The school has specialist status in science.
- The school has recently been awarded Teaching School status and the headteacher has become a National Leader in Education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Consolidate achievement to be more firmly outstanding for all groups of students by:
 - increasing the time students spend in lessons finding out things by themselves or in groups
 - providing more opportunities for dialogue between teachers and students about how they can improve their written work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students enter Year 7 with average attainment. By the end of Year 11, their attainment is significantly above that found nationally on many indicators. This reflects outstanding progress.
- Attainment in science, the school's specialist subject, is exceptionally high with 90% of students gaining an A* to C grade at GCSE.
- The school's current data indicate clearly that progress and attainment in all subjects are set to rise even further this year. Previous underachievement in English and humanities has been addressed extremely well and achievement there is at least good.
- Most groups of students in most subjects make outstanding progress throughout the school. This includes students who are disabled and those who have special educational needs. Outstanding achievement was seen during the inspection in almost all subject areas and in all years from Year 7 to Year 13.
- In 2012, students who were eligible for pupil premium funding achieved on average one GCSE grade lower than their peers in English and mathematics. Funding, such as one-to-one tuition and additional support in lessons, has been used to bring about significant improvement in the achievement of those students to reduce that gap by at least a half this year.
- Year 7 catch-up money is used well to boost the confidence of underachieving pupils and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. They are given additional learning experiences that boost their literacy, numeracy and communication skills during the summer holiday before they start at the school.
- Students who are educated off-site are monitored very carefully and make at least good and sometimes outstanding progress.
- The school enters students early for GCSEs. Students say that this motivates them to work hard and has led to improved outcomes, for example, in mathematics and English, especially in the number of students attaining the highest grades. Inspectors agree this is the case.
- Students in the sixth form make outstanding progress. Outstanding achievement was seen in all eight of the lessons observed in Year 12 and 13. A particular feature of those lessons was the way that the students worked maturely and independently, often expertly assessing their own learning under the expert guidance of the teacher.
- The school prepares students extremely well for the future. Their literacy, numeracy and communication skills are very well developed. Communication, in particular, is a key strength. Students were often seen confidently presenting material to the whole class and discussing with their peers ways to achieve even more highly.
- Students' achievement is outstanding and continually improving because of outstanding leadership and management and a strong drive to improve teaching.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Much teaching is outstanding and it is rarely less than good. In the outstanding lessons, teachers show expert subject knowledge and plan their lessons with work that is matched very well to the different needs of their students.
- In addition to relating learning directly to examination courses and national curriculum levels, teachers also help students to apply their learning to real-life situations, such as the relevance of chemical titrations to the pharmaceutical industry.
- Many teachers have innovative techniques to help students to grasp difficult concepts such as transformations in mathematics. For example, Year 11 students were encouraged to think spatially by getting down on their hands and knees to mimic the movements required.
- Challenge is a feature of many lessons and students rise to this extremely well. They are given opportunities to share ideas and then express their views to a wider audience. This was seen to

excellent effect in a Year 9 English lesson where students made outstanding progress in their understanding of the concept of dystopian fiction.

- Many lessons develop students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural by encouraging reflection and discussion of sensitive issues, such as how a fight for freedom might be interpreted as terrorism.
- Teaching assistants very effectively support students who are disabled or who have special educational needs by carefully adapting the work and by questioning the students expertly to check their understanding.
- There are, however, a few lessons in which teachers do not capitalise well enough on the enthusiasm of the students to be involved in their own learning. They do not allow students enough time to work independently. In addition, some marking does not always encourage students to respond to comments for improvement in their work. This means that the progress of some students is not as good as it might be to secure outstanding achievement for all groups of students.
- Parents agreed strongly that their children are well taught. The students themselves described their school as one that 'pushes them hard to do well'.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students have exemplary attitudes and their behaviour has been outstanding for some time. Staff agreed strongly that behaviour is good, as did most parents through their response on Parent View.
- Students set themselves very high standards. They respect the school's values and also those of their peers. They have an excellent understanding of all forms of bullying, including racist and homophobic bullying, and say that any bullying is extremely rare. They say that the occasional 'falling out' is quickly sorted out.
- The students' excellent attitude to work plays a large part in their successful learning. Many instances were seen of cooperative learning that included being sensitively critical when helping others to improve.
- The inspectors found the students to be very mature and thoughtful. They appreciate the 'great efforts' that the teachers make to help them learn so well. They say that school listens carefully to their views and that there is nothing that they would want to change about the school.
- Students describe their school as a very safe one. Both staff and parents echoed this view strongly. Students have an excellent understanding of safety issues when using computers and were observed working very safely in practical lessons.
- Attendance is above average and students are punctual to lessons. Exclusions have reduced significantly and are negligible.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leadership and management are exemplary. Leaders and managers, including governors, have a shared vision so there is a common purpose and determination to maintain high standards and improve further.
- The school has a commitment to the learner and learning and this is at the heart of everything it does. This ensures that students are very willing partners in learning.
- Staff development is a key priority. Senior staff have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching. Weekly sessions ensure that this is transmitted to all staff so that they know how to improve their practice. The result of this is that teaching is outstanding and continually improving. This has been recognised in the award of Teaching School status.
- The headteacher delegates well and subject leaders play a vital role in making checks on learning and teaching in their areas.
- The school knows its strengths and areas for development extremely well. It monitors and evaluates the progress of the students, including those in the sixth form, rigorously and any

underachievement is addressed quickly and effectively. Consequently, attainment and progress have improved strongly.

- Equality of opportunity is good, with most groups of students making outstanding progress. Gaps between the performance of different groups of students are closing rapidly.
- The staff questionnaires showed that staff feel very proud of the school and very valued. They appreciate the opportunities to further their own professional development.
- The curriculum and spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision are outstanding and meet the needs and interests of all students extremely well. Students are very appreciative of the impressive range of opportunities on offer to them, such as clubs, visits and visitors. They told the inspectors of the moving experience of hearing from a holocaust survivor in assembly.
- The school shares its good practice in many ways, including through its very successful annual teaching and learning conference for educational practitioners.
- The school receives very effective support from a team of external consultants, who have identified areas to 'tweak' to secure an outstanding status.
- The school's safeguarding meets statutory requirements. Child-protection procedures are exemplary.
- The school's trustees provide very effective support as they include many of the school governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - There is no doubt that the governing body has helped the school to improve and maintain its high standards. Governors work closely with the school and have an excellent knowledge of the quality of teaching. They are well trained and understand the data relating the students' achievement. Governors are fully involved with the allocation of the school's budget, including the funding for students eligible for the pupil premium and teachers' pay linked to their performance. As well as holding the school to account extremely well, they are self-critical and looking for ways that the school can do even better.

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	137457
Local authority	Not applicable
Inspection number	412394

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	2,178
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	350
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeff McCartney
Headteacher	Wendy Heslop
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01670 712311
Fax number	01670 730598
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