

Benfield School

Benfield Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE6 4NU

Inspection dates 8–9 May 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.

- The progress students make as they move through the school has not been fast enough. This includes the sixth form which also requires improvement.
- Students of all abilities do not achieve as consistently as they should in all subjects.
- Too few lessons are inspiring and exciting enough to capture and retain the interest of all students. Often, students are too reliant on the teacher or support assistant.
- Teaching requires improvement, because it does yet result in a consistent level of demand and challenge to students' thinking in lessons. Consequently, the pattern of progress and achievement is variable across most subjects.
- Leaders and managers do not always have a sharp enough focus on students' progress rates and their level of achievement when checking on the quality of teaching.

The school has the following strengths

- The concerted action taken by senior leaders to tackle underperformance is now making a difference with poor teaching eradicated.
- Students in the Additionally Resourced Centre (ARC) make good and often outstanding progress, because teaching and support matches their needs and abilities so well.
- The firm focus on improving English and mathematics is paying dividends with the gap in skills between students eligible for extra support and that of other students narrowing steadily.
- Rates of progress in the sixth form are accelerating, especially in mathematics and science.
- Senior leaders have high ambitions for the school. Governance is strong and has a firm grip on the strategic direction of the school.
- The curriculum is stimulating and helps develop the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and around school. At times it is exemplary.
- Staff work extremely hard to make certain all students, regardless of background, disability or need, are fully involved in all aspects of school life.
- High-quality care and support is provided for all students, including those potentially at risk.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 39 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 school 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 particular responsibilities (such as the leadership of subjects), and the school's achievement partner.
- Inspectors took account of the 20 responses to the online 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
Irene Lavelle	Additional Inspector
Mark Simpson	Additional Inspector
Alexandra Hook	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Benfield is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school, which has specialist sport 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, children from service families and those children that are looked after), is over twice the national average.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is well above the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is close to twice the average.
- The school has specialist provision for six students in Year 7 to Year 13, who have physical disabilities. This is known as the Additionally Resourced Centre (ARC).
- Most students are White British. A small number of students are from a number of other ethnic groups with very few who speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which set out the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- In September 2012, formal collaborative working with nearby Heaton Manor School began enabling the school to enhance what it offers to students in the sixth form.
- A very small number of mainly Year 10 and Year 11 students spend part of their week following training and support sessions off-site with providers, such as Barnardo's North East, Zodiac/Igeus Training and Northumbria Youth Action Ltd.
- In order to set a balanced budget, as a result of a fall in the number students on roll, the school is currently undergoing significant restructuring.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching in all years that is good and outstanding, so that inspiring methods ensure that all students achieve their full potential by:
 - raising expectations of what all students can achieve regardless of their starting points
 - making certain that tasks are closely matched to students' individual abilities and needs in order to get the most out of them
 - ensuring that high-quality questioning is used in all lessons to constantly check students' knowledge and understanding and stretch their thinking
 - making sure all marking provides students with clear feedback on how to improve in all subjects and insists upon higher-quality layout and presentation of their work.
- Ensure students make sustained rapid progress and achieve more highly in all subjects by:
 - increasing the opportunities for students to practise their oral, reading and writing skills across the curriculum
 - helping students develop the confidence to consider problems, think analytically, make deductions and justify their responses without having to rely on teachers and teaching assistants for support
 - ensuring that during lessons observations leaders carefully and frequently check the levels of demand presented to each student and the impact it has on their achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Results in GCSE examinations showing the number of students gaining five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, has improved year-on-year and are broadly average. In the past, progress made by students, including those from different ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language, has been below that found in other schools nationally.
- Students enter school with skills below and sometimes well below the national average. Students' speech and language skills vary across year groups. In 2012 GCSE examinations, too few students exceeded what is expected of them. In English, standards were higher than in mathematics. Across a range of GCSE subjects standards were variable and too low in many subjects, such as art, design and technology, French, history, geography and physical education. Current school information, supported by inspection evidence, shows that progress is now quicker with more students of all abilities exceeding what is expected of them.
- Those disabled students in the specialist ARC provision achieve well and sometimes exceptionally well. This is because they are extremely well cared for, their needs accurately identified and all of their lessons present good levels of challenge. The progress of students with special educational needs, although the same as their classmates, requires improvement because their activities and tasks are not precisely and consistently enough matched to individual needs.
- On entry into the sixth form, student qualifications are lower than average. Over time their progress has been uneven, but current groups are making faster progress, such as in mathematics and science.
- Students are carefully identified for early GCSE entry from Year 10 onwards. This enables students across a range of ability, including those in the ARC, to attain well and achieve their potential.
- Increasingly successful use is made of pupil premium funding to eliminate the gap in standards between those students eligible for support and other students. However, those students eligible for support remain close to a grade behind in English and over a grade behind in mathematics. Positive action is improving reading, writing and mathematical skills in Year 7, for those eligible for additional catch-up funding although opportunities are sometimes missed, such as in tutor time, to improve the reading skill of all students at a faster rate.
- The very few students that are educated off-site for part of the week attend regularly, enjoy their training, benefit from the help and support they receive and gain accreditation, well matched to their needs.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is improving, because of the determined action by senior leaders to improve the quality of learning in all subjects. A majority of teaching observed was good and occasionally outstanding. However, there are not enough lessons that are consistently good where methods are thought-provoking to ensure all students make at least good progress and achieve highly.
- Teachers create a friendly and calm atmosphere in classrooms. Students arrive ready to learn. Relationships between adults and students are good and sometimes excellent. Any inappropriate behaviour is managed skilfully and effectively. Yet, too often tasks and activities are not sufficiently well matched to students' learning needs to interest and challenge all abilities represented in each class
- In those lessons which require improvement:
 - expectations of what students can do and achieve are not demanding and exacting enough
 - methods are too mundane and students too dependent upon the teacher or the supporting adult
 - questioning does not always trace students' thinking and check their understanding frequently

enough

- students are not sufficiently encouraged to develop their confidence in considering problems, thinking analytically, making deductions and then justifying their responses.
- Progress is fastest and achievement highest when:
 - expectations of what students of all ages and abilities can achieve are high
 - imaginative, practical and active methods capture and hold interest well
 - questioning constantly prods students' thinking and checks their knowledge and understanding
 - students are confident working independently or sharing ideas and solutions with a partner.
- In lessons when achievement is highest, such as in English and science, methods used provide that essential spark which spurs students to apply their skills to testing tasks. For example, students were observed totally absorbed using their evaluative writing skills to create a commentary comparing water with tea. Skilful questioning constantly provokes students' curiosity and firms up their thinking. Improvements in the quality of teaching in the sixth form are helping students make faster progress tackling even more stimulating and taxing tasks.
- The majority of teachers mark students work regularly. Occasionally students are given good opportunities to mark their own or a friend's work. However too much work in books is incomplete, corrections are not completed and work is not accurately or neatly enough presented. Teachers' written comments in students' books do not provide often enough, succinct, clear guidance on how to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good, students feel safe and almost all enjoy school. All parents agree. Occasionally attitudes and conduct are exemplary. Students get on well with each other and are sensible and thoughtful. ARC students benefit from the often high levels of respect and consideration shown towards them.
- In discussions, students report that they feel happy and secure in classrooms and social areas. They observe that staff are always on hand and happily share a worry or anxiety they may have. All parents agree that their children are really well looked after. Students know how to avoid risk and danger are well informed about bullying. Records show that the few incidents of inappropriate behaviour are effectively managed and resolved. Bullying, racist and homophobic incidents are rare.
- Students, particularly in the ARC, are exceptionally well cared for, especially at times of crisis and emergency. In the sixth form students are very well guided and supported when they are planning their future. Students who speak English as an additional language receive effective support. Case studies show that school staff work highly effectively with support agencies and families to help overcome problems which may arise.
- Students take responsibilities in their stride and value how hard the school works to enable them to achieve success. Every effort is made to ensure that an interesting range of first-hand experiences, such as the Year 9 residential and the production of Aladdin, are provided in order to boost students' aspirations and build-up their confidence.
- Attendance rates in the past have been too low. Wide-ranging and resolute action has been taken by senior leaders to tackle pockets of persistent absence. This is improving attendance rates a lot and persistent absence is reducing.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, adroitly supported by a talented deputy headteacher, has worked hard and taken decisive action to improve the quality of teaching and learning, since the previous inspection. Underperformance has been tackled. The senior leaders have reshaped the senior leadership, adding to the drive for improvement. The Governing Body has been rejuvenated with the appointment of a new Chair. Together, this is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and the rate of students' progress in a lot of lessons. Senior leaders know that there is

more to do to sustain improvements.

- Weaknesses in the teaching of English and mathematics have been addressed through new appointments and well planned training. This includes sharing best practice with the local network of schools. Selective use of early GCSE entry is successfully enabling students to reach their full potential by the end of Year 11.
- Improvements in English are helping students improve their reading and writing skills at a faster rate. Even so, inconsistencies remain and opportunities sometimes missed, such as embedding literacy skills across all subjects relentlessly.
- The system for checking students' performance is robust and increasingly accurate in identifying the extent of progress and development of each student. Senior leaders are aware that opportunities are sometimes missed to use progress information to shape activities and match demands in lessons more closely to individual needs, including for students in the sixth form. Accomplished restructuring has been used to ensure incentives and rewards for teachers are closely matched to the quality of performance in the classroom.
- The good curriculum is well suited to the wide range of students' needs, including those in the well led ARC provision. An interesting variety of visits and visitors is well matched to students' interests and needs. Together this work supports the students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The recently established joint sixth form working is providing students with a wider variety of subject choices.
- The school works tirelessly to ensure students are involved and have equal opportunities in all aspects of school life. Discrimination is not tolerated. Those students potentially at risk because of their circumstances are closely checked to ensure any issues that hinder their development are promptly addressed.
- The sports specialism has clear benefits enriching a range of students' skills and enhancing their enjoyment of sport.
- Good use is made of local authority expertise, the achievement partner and local consultants to scrutinise performance. This action ensures that priorities are accurately identified. Action to tackle weaknesses are effective, although systems to check the quality of teaching are not always sufficiently rigorous and precise to ensure all lessons present consistent levels of demand and challenge to ensure all students achieve well.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements, with much good practice supporting the high quality of care provided for students.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The strong governing body demonstrate a good grasp of current school performance, including the quality of teaching and students' rate of progress and achievement. They challenge and hold the school to account in positive ways. The governing body are aware of how the school spends its pupil premium funding and check the progress of students eligible for the additional support. Regular training and briefings ensure they have an assured grasp of school performance information. The governing body works closely with the headteacher to tackle underperformance. They ensure that teachers' performance management is effectively linked to rewards and incentives for good teaching. They have taken resolute action to address the financial consequences of a falling number of students on the roll. Governance is 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	108526
Local authority	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Inspection number	412810

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	650
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Bowhill
Headteacher	Neil Walker
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2010
Telephone number	0191 2656091
Fax number	0191 2655974
Email address	admin@benfield.newcastle.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

