

Washington School

Spout Lane, Washington, Tyne and Wear, NE37 2AA

Inspection dates 18–19 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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 make good progress. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has risen over the last three years and is now above the national average.
- Teaching is good. Lessons are well structured, there is a positive working atmosphere in the classroom and students make good progress.
- The school has developed a positive and safe climate for learning with courteous and respectful relationships between staff and students and among different groups of students.
- Leadership and management are good at all levels. The Executive headteacher and Head of school's strong focus on improving teaching and monitoring the impact of middle leaders has resulted in good achievement.
- Students with special educational needs and those who are supported by the pupil premium make good progress. Gaps are closing between the achievement of these groups of students and their peers.
- The governing body has clear and effective processes for holding senior leaders to account for all aspects of the school's performance. Governors and senior leaders have developed effective partnership work across the federation, this promotes the improvement of teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in some subject areas, for example, humanities, is not as high as it should be. In some subjects, the most able students are not always sufficiently challenged to do their best.
- Opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy are sometimes missed.
- Although there is good teaching, it is not consistent across the school, and students are not given sufficient opportunities to work independently.
- Attendance, although it is improving, still prevents some students achieving their full potential.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 31 lessons in 15 different subject areas. Six of the lessons seen were joint lesson observations with the school’s senior leaders.
- Inspectors listened to students read and evaluated the quality of students’ work in lessons. Inspectors visited different areas of the school site, including the curriculum access provision and the school library. Inspectors saw staff delivering sessions to develop and improve students’ literacy skills.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, the chair and other members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors spoke to three different groups of students.
- Inspectors considered the views of 15 parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They also considered the views that parents expressed in the school’s own questionnaire. They analysed the 41 responses received to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors analysed the school’s published examination results. They looked at the school’s data on students’ progress, lesson plans, minutes of meetings, including those of the governing body and records related to attendance and behaviour. They also reviewed the school’s self-evaluation and plans for improvement and documents relating to child protection and safeguarding arrangements.
- The inspectors considered the school’s arrangements for making best use of the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, those whose parents are in the armed forces and those known to be eligible for free school meals.

Inspection team

Helen Storey, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Mark Simpson

Additional Inspector

Robert Pritchard

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Anne Smedley

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-size secondary school.
- The large majority of students at the school are from White British backgrounds and the proportion speaking English as an additional language is very small.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is much higher than the national average.
- The school has a technology specialism.
- Twenty two Key Stage 4 students attend off site provision at Sunderland College as part of their vocational programme, courses are provided in Engineering and Motor Vehicle. Students attend for up to two half-days per week and are taught in school for the rest of the time.
- Up to 15 students from other schools in the district attend the local authority curriculum access specialist provision that is located at Washington School.
- The school is federated with Thornhill School and has a single governing body. The schools work in partnership and have joint programmes to develop teaching and the curriculum. The school has a strong partnership with Sunderland College where many students progress for post 16 study.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress at the end of Key Stage 4.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of students who achieve well in humanities subjects.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management in sustaining improvement by carefully reviewing the impact of current strategies. Further improve attendance, literacy and numeracy levels to accelerate overall improvement.
- Use the outstanding practice in the school to improve the quality of teaching so that all is at least good and more is outstanding by ensuring all teachers:
 - make use of the very good data that is available to plan lessons matched to students starting points, especially for the higher ability students
 - capitalise on students' positive attitudes to learning by providing more imaginative opportunities for them to work independently.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' starting points when they join the school are lower than the national average. In recent years the proportion of students gaining five GCSE's at grades A* to C including English and mathematics has risen steadily and now equals the national average. This represents good progress. The numbers of students making the expected rate of progress in English and mathematics is rising and in 2012 was in line with the national average. Students at the school who attract pupil premium funding, those with disabilities or special educational needs and those with low starting points make very good progress compared to the national average and are closing the gap between their achievement and that of their peers in the school.
- Progress in English and mathematics and a number of other subjects is strong and improving. There is evidence of outstanding achievement in German. In geography, attainment and progress lag behind and are poor in comparison.
- In 2012, the number of students making better than expected progress in English and mathematics improved and current school data suggests this will continue to improve, however, it is still below the national average. Although improving, the achievement of the most able students is not yet as high as it could be.
- Students are entered for GCSE mathematics from the winter of Year 11, this enables most students across the ability range to achieve their potential, however, no A* or A grades were achieved at the earlier entry point.
- The school involves pupils in a wide range of activities to improve their reading and literacy skills, these include targeted interventions such as a programme linking letters and sounds for specific students and wider initiatives such as the development of the new library facility. There is early evidence that this is having a positive impact on some students' reading ages. Strategies for improving students' numeracy are not so well developed.
- The school ensures that students follow courses suited to their interests and needs. There is a good balance of academic, technical and practical options available and the school is carefully reviewing this to ensure it meets students' current and future needs enabling them to progress to further study or training. Off-site provision is carefully monitored and students who attend this achieve well.
- Students' achievement is not yet outstanding because there are still inconsistencies in the performance of some subjects. Senior leaders have taken effective action to improve achievement in many areas, for example in science where achievement is strongly improving to match that in English and mathematics. They accept that they must further refine their strategies to ensure that students make exceptional progress in all subjects in order to reach their goal of becoming an outstanding school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Observations of lessons confirmed the schools' view that most teaching is good across most subjects. Students make good progress because the lessons are well planned, have a variety of activities and for many students, the lessons meet their abilities.
- In most lessons, students know how well they are doing, and what they need to do next to improve.
- Students are enthusiastic and enjoy participating in their lessons. They want to achieve, and behave with respect towards the staff and each other. Where teaching is better the work that the teachers give to the students is interesting and helps them to do well.
- In these better lessons, the students are given opportunities to work on their own. Sometimes the teacher could give their classes the chance to learn more independently; speed up, and move onto new work more quickly.

- Assessment takes place at many points in lessons. Students reflect on how well they are doing and also how they can help each other improve. For example, in a physical education lesson, students assessed each other using a simple traffic light system using red, amber and green, then they developed this further to use coaching cards to give good feedback to other students.
- In good lessons, teachers ask questions which help students understand their work. In some lessons the questions are too simple, and do not challenge the students enough to make them think.
- Where teaching is less successful the teacher does not make it clear what the point of the lesson is, and the same activities are given to everyone, so the lesson is not suitable for every students' needs. This is especially true for the more able students who are not challenged enough or given opportunity to work with each other to ensure learning in lessons moves at a quick pace.
- The quality of marking is good. Teachers mark books, and ask students to improve their work. However, in a few lessons the students did not follow up on this advice.
- Teachers are aware of all students' specific needs and starting points and in good lessons this information is used to create work that challenges them and enables them to make good progress. In weaker lessons students known to be eligible for pupil premium funding, students with special educational needs and more-able students do not always make the progress they are capable of because the work is not closely enough matched to their specific needs.
- Leaders have taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching through a carefully targeted programme of training and development for all teachers. Teachers now use many different ways to help students' literacy and numeracy. There is a strategy to improve their skills and the school needs to develop this further by evaluating what works best in lessons. There is further work to be done by sharing the outstanding practice that exists in the school more widely, developing the role of other adults to support learning in the classroom and ensuring that the quality of teaching is equally strong at both key stages.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school is calm and orderly, students are positive about learning and supportive of each other. There are very few reported incidents of racial, homophobic or cyber-bullying, students report that any incidents of this kind are dealt with swiftly and effectively by teachers. Older students confirm that behaviour is much improved since the last inspection.
- In the best lessons, good behaviour makes a marked contribution to learning with students collaborating and supporting each other effectively. They demonstrate an enthusiasm for answering questions, sharing ideas and being creative. In lessons where teaching is weaker, students lack opportunities to make the contributions they are capable of and they become disengaged and restless, this is more apparent with younger students.
- The school's behaviour for learning policy is effective and consistently implemented by staff, this contributes to positive relationships. The number and level of incidents requiring sanctions has fallen considerably in the past year and the school is effective in supporting students to improve their behaviour so that repeat offences are low. The number of fixed-term exclusions has fallen. The school's praise system is well liked by students and makes a significantly positive contribution to the ethos of the school.
- Students say they feel safe at school and this is supported by the views of parents. Students are taught about the potential risks they face and know how to keep themselves and others safe. They are confident to approach staff if they need to.
- Middle leaders check the rewards and sanctions information regularly to ensure that staff apply the system consistently with all students. They then use this information to plan support for individual students and to ensure that good behaviour remains a high profile priority throughout the school.
- Attendance remains an area of concern. Persistent absence and absence overall are still too high. While there have been some very recent improvements these have not yet been sustained

over time and it is too early to see the impact of the school's new approaches.

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher and other senior leaders have brought about substantial improvement in the school since the last inspection. This is demonstrated by the increase in students' achievements, the positive attitude to learning in the school and the good relationships between staff and students. The impact of the federation with Thornhill School has enabled best practice to be shared in order to improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum. The executive headteacher has implemented effective arrangements to enable this and the relationship between the two schools is continuing to develop. For example, a joint staff training day is planned to consider adjustments that each school might make to the subjects that they teach.
- The school maintains a positive relationship with the local authority that has recently undertaken a review of the school's effectiveness. The school hosts the local authority funded curriculum access project that is valued by schools in the locality because of the specialist expertise that is available to support students with special educational needs.
- Senior leaders have communicated clear improvement priorities to all staff. Middle leaders share and support these goals and understand the important role they have to play in bringing about improvement. Although the quality of middle leaders is not yet consistently good in all areas, senior leaders have high expectations and support individual leaders' improvement through carefully focussed training.
- Governors and senior leaders evaluate the school's work accurately and share a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Improvement has been particularly strong when leaders have devised and implemented consistent systems throughout the school, for example, the very clear behaviour for learning policy that is welcomed by staff and students.
- Senior leaders scrutinise all aspects of teachers' performance including lesson observations and data about students' achievement and progress before recommending teachers for pay progression. There is an effective programme of support to enable teachers to reach the expected standards. Leaders hold underperforming staff to account and there is evidence that, on occasion, this has included preventing staff getting a pay rise and/or capability procedures.
- The curriculum meets the needs and interests of most students, there is a good mix of academic, technical and practical subjects available. Students value the advice and guidance they receive that helps them select subjects appropriate to their abilities and aspirations at Key Stage 4. Off-site alternative provision is regularly visited to make sure it is of good quality. The school has a close relationship with the local further education college that ensures students are well prepared for post 16 education and training. The school is currently carefully reviewing the curriculum it offers so that it continues to meet the needs of all students, particularly the more able and those who enter the school with lower attainment.
- Leaders' effective actions over time have led to significant improvements in the quality of education that the school provides. Staff support the executive headteacher and senior leaders' vision for improvement and know the part they have to play. Parents and the local community are gaining confidence in the school's ability to provide high quality education, this can be seen by the very high attendance at a recent open evening. These factors indicate a strong capacity for further improvement and show that the school has the ability to achieve its ambition to become outstanding.
- A wide range of opportunities are available to enhance student's understanding of spiritual, moral and cultural issues. These range from students participating in the development of their school's new library and resource centre to the sports ambassador scheme that involves older students promoting healthy lifestyles to the wider community. The school supports a range of educational visits, including those focussed on creating a cohesive school community and those focussed on a wider cultural understanding.
- Safeguarding and child protection procedures are secure and meet statutory requirements.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body support and challenge the executive headteacher and senior leaders effectively. Governors have detailed knowledge of teaching and students' progress and have developed regular, clear procedures, including performance management for holding leaders to account and have ensured that they have the necessary expertise to ask appropriately searching questions. They have a strong commitment to the shared vision and strategic direction of the school and work closely with parents and other key stakeholders to raise its profile and status.
- Governors are visible in the school, they attend open evenings, publicise success through the school's newsletter and are aware of the need to maintain the momentum for school improvement. As a result, their evaluation of the school is sound, they know the school well and fulfil their statutory duties effectively. Governors know how the pupil premium and other targeted funding are being spent and are clear about how eligible students are doing.
- Governors have a robust plan to further extend and increase their impact. Their priorities include more systematic visits to lessons and further training for governors including the National Lead Governors programme. The governing body's positive relationship with school leaders and other key stakeholders enable them to work effectively across both schools in the federation. They maintain a link with the local education authority and have a representative on the Board of Governors at the local further education college. They are working with local employers to increase opportunities for students to access apprenticeships.

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	108865
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	427898

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	742
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jim Clarke
Headteacher	John Hallworth
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2012
Telephone number	0191 561 3845
Fax number	0191 417 2333
Email address	washington.school@schools.sunderland.gov.uk

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