

# Whitworth Park School and Sixth Form College

Whitworth Lane, Spennymoor, County Durham, DL16 7LN

## Inspection dates

25–26 September 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- The inspirational leadership of the headteacher is transforming this school. The school's governing body and other levels of school leadership make very strong contributions to the school's improvement, particularly with the quality of teaching and students' achievement. Consequently, this is a rapidly improving school.
- The reorganisation from two schools to one has been managed expertly. Numbers of staff have been reduced considerably and some are continuing to work in temporary accommodation. Despite this turmoil staff morale is high.
- The standards that students attain have been above average over time, although in 2013 they dipped. The progress of students currently on roll is at least good with the strongest progress in Years 7 to 9.
- The sixth form requires improvement because progress over time has not been good enough. However, for students currently on roll, it is good.
- The quality of teaching is rapidly improving because systems to develop staffs' professional skills and monitor the quality of their work are outstanding. There is a positive culture of reflection, collaboration and improvement.
- The school considers students' personal development is as important as their academic development. Students have good social skills and demonstrate high moral standards. Students behave well around the school and when teaching is good or better, their attitudes to their learning are consistently positive. Students show respect for all adults in the school and they express appreciation for what adults do for them.
- Older students talk in detail about the improvements they have seen in their school. Students are proud of their school and their achievements.
- Attendance is above average.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- While achievement is at least good for most groups of students, it is not as strong for the highest-ability students or those in the sixth form.
- There is still some teaching that requires improvement because a few teachers apply school policies and procedures inconsistently.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors worked with senior staff while observing teaching and learning and reviewing work previously completed by students. Inspectors observed 37 lessons taught by 37 different teachers. They also made several shorter visits to lessons. Inspectors spoke to many students during breaks, lunchtimes, and during lessons. They also spoke to a group of Year 7 students about their improvement in literacy and numeracy.
- They observed activities taking place during form and registration time. Inspectors attended a school assembly.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, senior leaders and with staff. A discussion was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including internal and external data about students' attainment and progress, behaviour and attendance records and students' work. They scrutinised safeguarding procedures and records.
- During the inspection 63 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account. Inspectors reviewed responses to parental surveys conducted by the school and 50 staff responses to a questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Neil Mackenzie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Heather Scott

Additional Inspector

Catherine Laing

Additional Inspector

Jim Hall

Additional Inspector

Colin Scott

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Whitworth Park School and Sixth Form College opened on the 1 September 2012 when its predecessor school, Spennymoor Comprehensive School, expanded to accommodate students transferred from the closure of Tudhoe Grange School. During that year the school operated across two sites. At the beginning of this year Whitworth Park moved into a new building enabling all students to be accommodated on one site. Whitworth Park School and Sixth Form College is a larger-than-average-sized secondary school.
- When Whitworth Park's predecessor school, Spennymoor Comprehensive School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- Whitworth Park is a Trust School and is the lead partner of the Spennymoor Learning Community Trust. The Trust is a charitable company which supports the education of students at the school through partnerships with other organisations.
- There have been a significant number of staff changes over the past 13 months. When the schools combined, there were 110 teachers, there are now 78. The numbers of leaders at the most senior level have reduced from 12 to nine.
- The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium is slightly higher than the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after.
- Almost all students are White British. The proportion of students supported through school action is much lower than that found nationally. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than the national average.
- Forty six students attend Bishop Auckland College on a part-time basis to study a range of vocational courses. In addition one student attends Houghall College part time to study agriculture and animal husbandry. Three students attend full time, off-site provision at County Durham Home & Hospital, a facility known as the GAP and the Green School
- The school enters some students early for GCSE examinations.
- The previous school met the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the achievement of high-ability students and the progress of students in the sixth form so that they are at least consistently good.
- Eradicate any teaching that is not yet good by using the existing good and outstanding practice within the school, and by the consistent application of school policies.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards in English and mathematics have improved over recent years and, until last year, students were attaining consistently above-average results. However, results for some English students in one key element in 2013 were weaker than expected and had a significantly negative impact on headline results. Consequently overall, there was a dip in attainment last year. The school has quickly identified the causes for this, and made appropriate improvements.
- Students progress well across a wide range of subjects and qualifications including those students who attend provision off site. Most improvement recently has been seen in mathematics, art, modern foreign languages and physical education.
- Over past years the progress students made in the sixth form was not good enough. This was due to students starting courses that did not suit their aspirations, needs and capabilities. However, there is now a new sixth form with a different ethos, set in a new building. Students have a different dress code. They choose from a much improved set of courses, and their personal development is at the heart of their self-improvement. For students currently in the sixth form, progress is good.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make similar progress to other students in the school because teachers are given detailed information on how to meet the needs of individual students and good guidance on how to support them. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to the development of all students, and this group in particular.
- Students who are known to be supported by the pupil premium, make equally good progress as other students in English and in mathematics. In 2013, the standards they reached were not far behind the standards reached by other students in the school.
- The school is aware that those students who are most able have not progressed as well as other ability groups in the past.
- The school identifies students who join in Year 7 with weaknesses in reading and mathematics. They provide good catch-up sessions for these students and their improvement in reading is particularly strong.
- Last year, the whole-school initiative to improve literacy had a positive and significant impact, across all subjects students now communicate well. The school is also successfully teaching students to use a wide range of skills across all of their learning including mathematics, information and communication technology. In addition, qualities such as resilience and perseverance are also well taught across all subjects and years.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Governors, senior leaders and managers have very skilfully and rapidly combined two unique institutions so that, currently, staff have a desire to improve all that they do for the benefit of all students. This can be most clearly seen in the impact of self-evaluation, appraisal and professional development on the rapidly improving quality of teaching.
- The quality of most teaching is good or outstanding because teachers know the needs of their students in detail and plan learning activities accordingly. The best teachers have high expectations of their students and relationships are always highly positive. Most significantly, there is a rapidly developing and highly successful common approach to many aspects of teaching. This enables teachers to learn from the excellent practice that exists in the school, and students flourish through consistent approaches and implementation of systems. For example, when the school's policy on assessment and academic guidance is followed by teachers, students can quickly understand how well they have done, and how to improve. There is a school-wide expectation that students will refine and improve their work until it meets the required standard. Students respond very well to the consistency of expectation and routine.
- Through incisive monitoring of teaching, the quality of teachers' questioning was identified as an area for improvement. The work undertaken by the staff is currently having a very positive

impact on how well they extend students' understanding through well-constructed sequences of questions.

- Where teaching required improvement, low expectations of students' capabilities slowed the pace of learning and the levels of challenge did not motivate students. These teachers tend to commit less fully to the successful school-wide policies and procedures, so students themselves have lower expectations.
- When asked, students say that the quality of teaching 'is much better now'. They say that teachers believe in them and are always keen to help. Students can explain precisely how well they are doing in each of their subjects and why. They can also explain how to get better.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Students enjoy their learning and, when the quality of teaching is at least good, students have good attitudes to learning and this has a positive impact on the atmosphere in classrooms and the progress they make. When given the opportunity students will confidently discuss their ideas and justify their answers.
- Despite there still being limitations and constrictions around the school site due to building work, behaviour around the school is good. Students show consideration towards each other. They are polite, courteous and helpful to adults.
- Inspectors investigated the question of bullying in depth and found it happened infrequently. Students say that bullying is always dealt with promptly and well. All students could name many adults, including the headteacher, they could turn to if they were unhappy about any aspect of the school.
- Behaviour is well monitored and so any student who misbehaves will be spoken to without delay. This is usually sufficient to prevent minor misdemeanours developing into more serious events.
- Students say they always feel safe in and around the school and parents agree. Students are taught about dangers and how to manage them. This includes prejudice-based bullying, internet use, health and well-being concerns.
- Students' attendance is above the national average and they are punctual to school and to individual lessons.
- The school is improving its efforts to work with parents, even those who are difficult to reach. A key factor in the efficient merger of the two schools was the good consultation with parents. Parents who responded the online questionnaire (Parent View) said they felt their child is well looked after at this school.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- Governors and school leaders and managers, at all levels, have worked extremely effectively to galvanise two schools into one cohesive institution where progress and teaching are improving rapidly and where students are happy and enjoy attending.
- School leaders and managers know the school's strengths and areas for improvement very well because procedures to monitor key aspects of the school are simple to use yet highly effective.
- The school makes excellent use of external sources of support and guidance. For example, as part of the Bright Futures Project, all Year 13 students took part in a full day event where they attended a range of seminars run by local industrialists and trainers. They learned about the extensive range of opportunities available to them, developed their skills in presenting themselves and how to make successful applications. Many Year 6 students attended a two-week summer school to help them with their transition to secondary education. It serves to inspire them, build their confidence and ensure a smooth start to their secondary school.
- An essential element of this cohesive and integrated school is the high priority placed on students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is an extensive and varied programme of enriching activities. Authentic opportunities are found to broaden students

experience, confidence and leadership skills. For example, the sixth-form students were key leaders during the Year 6 summer school.

- Students are guided well on how to successfully progress to their next stage of education, employment or training. Students say that careers advice is useful.
- The pastoral care for all students is of the highest calibre.
- School leaders and managers are passionate about providing the courses that best suit the aspirations and needs of every student. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 demonstrates some highly individualised programmes of learning. Leaders work hard to ensure equal opportunities are secured for all.
- The school makes very good use of early entry to GCSE examinations. Many students build confidence through an early success and are inspired to go on and improve on their grade. Others may complete some GCSEs at the end of Year 10 and are then able to broaden their experience by studying additional courses. Early entry has also provided solutions to some complex problems created by joining two different cohorts of students together, some at different stages of their courses.
- The local authority has provided good support and guidance to the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The school is very well served by an extremely effective governing body. Working with the headteacher, it has guided this highly successful merger and established a clear vision and ethos for the school.
  - The governing body has a very accurate understanding of the performance of all groups of students. Governors know about the quality of teaching and ensure teachers' performance is monitored closely and successes are appropriately rewarded with pay progression. They have the capacity to hold all staff, including the headteacher, to account.
  - Governors manage the school's finances very well and can describe how funding is spent, including additional funding to support students known to be eligible for the pupil premium.
  - The governing body ensures all statutory duties are maintained, including effective systems to ensure the safeguarding of children.
  - Governors have a programme of professional and personal development which contributes significantly to the quality of their work.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114300
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	425875

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,125
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	98
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	A M Armstrong
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Gillis
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 May 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01388 824800
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