

Tanfield School, Specialist College of Science and Engineering

Tanfield Lea Road, Stanley, County Durham, DH9 8AY

Inspection dates 6–7 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- This is a good and improving school where students achieve well because of effective teaching.
- Teaching is good in the majority of lessons and some is outstanding.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and students enjoy coming to school.
- The school has a strong ethos of care whereby teachers know, value and support students well. Students say they feel safe and cared for by teachers.
- The curriculum is well planned to meet students' needs and prepares them well for the next stages of their education.
- Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school and a key factor in students emerging as responsible young adults.
- The headteacher, well supported by a determined leadership team, has brought about sustained improvements in teaching, achievement and behaviour since the previous inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students' achievement is not outstanding because of the need to further narrow the gaps for some groups of students, including those eligible for free school meals and those that have the ability to achieve the very highest grades.
- A small proportion of teaching requires improvement and more needs to be outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 39 lessons or parts of lessons of which four were undertaken jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, groups of staff, students, four members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to 69 staff questionnaires. They considered information from recent school initiated surveys of parents' views as well as to 26 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- During lesson observations inspectors reviewed work in students' books and they also observed students behaviour between lessons inside and outside the school building.
- The inspection team examined a number of documents, including the school's data on students' current progress, behaviour and safeguarding, the school's own evaluation of its performance, the school improvement plan, subject improvement plans, minutes from governors' meetings and notes of visits from the local authority adviser.

Inspection team

Philip Smith, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Christopher Keeler

Her Majesty's Inspector

Catherine Laing

Additional Inspector

Sheila Kaye

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Tanfield School is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those from families in the armed services and those in local authority care.)
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below the national average.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below the national average. The proportion of these supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school uses Consett YMCA, Green School and Peterlee College to provide alternative off site provision for some students.
- The school works closely with four local primary schools and a local college to support students' transition from primary school and into post-16 education or training.
- There have been significant changes at senior leadership level since September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To continue to improve the quality of teaching by:
 - developing the ability of teachers to consistently identify students misconceptions during lessons and address these quickly
 - sharpening the quality of questioning when reviewing students' understanding and to use this information to plan work that always matches their learning needs.
- To ensure all middle leaders consistently evaluate the impact of strategies designed to improve the quality of teaching within their departments.
- Narrow further the achievement gaps for some groups of students, including those eligible for free school meals and those that have the ability to achieve the very highest grades.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students achieve well as a result of good and sometimes outstanding teaching.
- Students typically join the school with broadly average starting points. Over the last three years student outcomes have generally risen and overall are above national average. This demonstrates good progress including for some students attending alternative provision.
- The achievement of Year 11 students in 2013 saw achievement rise further despite starting points below the national average on entry to the school.
- Results in 2013 indicate that the proportion of students gaining five A*-C grades, including English and mathematics, continued to rise. The proportion of students achieving the higher A*/A grades in English and mathematics increased significantly in 2013 and is now in line with the national average.
- The proportion of students making average and good progress in English and mathematics increased significantly this year and helped produce the best ever school results.
- In lessons students generally make good and sometimes outstanding progress.
- There is early entry in mathematics for some students. This does not stop them from sitting the examination again in Year 11 so that they can achieve the highest possible grade.
- Students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up programme are making good gains in reading and mathematics and are closing the gaps in achievement with their peers and students nationally.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress. This is because of effective support in lessons by well qualified and capable teaching assistants.
- While achievement is improving, gaps have not narrowed fast enough over time between those students eligible for support through the pupil premium and their peers.
- Consistently high standards in all subjects have not yet been reached or sustained over time.

The quality of teaching is good

- Over time teaching has continued to improve. Students generally experience good teaching and some which is outstanding. The overall quality of teaching is not outstanding because a small proportion still requires improvement.
- When teaching is good students make good progress. Teaching is typically characterised by high expectations, quality relationships between students and adults, secure subject knowledge and lessons that sustain students' interest.
- In the less effective lessons teachers sometimes talk for too long rather than allowing students to think for themselves. There are some occasions when students are too dependent on the teacher to tell them what they need to do next to further their learning.
- Students learn best when they are fully engaged in what they are doing. In these lessons there is a strong focus on literacy development and students develop good writing and speaking skills as a result. This is due to the use of hands on experiences or through thought provoking debates and discussions. For example in a Year 10 Geography lesson students were investigating the impact of social and economic issues on the environment through high quality discussion and debate.
- The ability of teachers to ask probing questions in order to identify students' misconceptions during lessons is not yet at a consistently high quality across the school. This can sometimes inhibit good or better progress.
- Teachers mark work regularly. Marking and feedback is particularly strong in English, mathematics and science. Comments in students' books are usually evaluative as well as informative and helpful direction is given to how they might improve their work.

- Teaching assistants provide good support and make a valued contribution to students' progress. This is evident when supporting individual students in lessons and when delivering intervention programmes such as the accelerated reading programme in Years 7 and 8.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students have positive attitudes towards school. A student told inspectors "I love coming to this school."
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, including at lunchtime and breaks. Students are polite and show mutual respect towards each other and to adults. Behaviour is managed consistently well.
- The quality of support that is provided by staff in the school's behaviour and inclusion centres has resulted in a significant decline in fixed term exclusions and no permanent exclusions.
- Students are keen to do well, arrive on time and are usually ready to learn. In most cases they realise that they have a shared responsibility to manage their own behaviour.
- Inspectors agreed with the school's own evaluation that behaviour is good. It is not outstanding yet because a minority of students are sometimes passive learners. This inhibits their opportunities to practise and develop strategies for managing their own learning.
- The school offers a safe environment. Rare instances of bullying are dealt with effectively. Students and parents said they are confident that bullying would be dealt with promptly and effectively. Students understand what constitutes bullying, including homophobic, racist and cyber bullying.
- Attendance has improved for all students and is now broadly in line with the national average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, strongly supported by governors and staff, has been at the forefront of the school's continued improvement. The headteacher has set the right tone for all members of the school community, one in which only the highest standards possible are acceptable for the students. He is driven to achieve excellence and is not satisfied with anything less.
- The school's evaluation of its strengths and areas for improvement is honest and rigorous and leads to a good school improvement plan focusing on the right priorities. Consequently, there is a strong focus on driving continued improvements in teaching and achievement to raise standards further.
- A comprehensive professional development programme is planned for staff coupled with a coaching programme to support further improvements to teaching. However, as this started at the beginning of this academic year it is too soon to fully evaluate its impact.
- There are inconsistencies in the way some middle leaders plan for improvements to be made in their own departments in showing how teaching will improve and how the impact on students' progress will be measured.
- There are clear links between school wide priorities and those set for all teachers as part of the performance management process. Teachers recognise it is a completely transparent process.
- The school has a strong track record for promoting good achievement. It has effectively addressed all the issues raised in the previous inspection. The school is therefore well placed to secure further improvements.
- Most leaders check the quality of teaching accurately and through the very careful monitoring of student performance identify areas for improvement. This has contributed well to improved outcomes in a number of subjects including English and mathematics.
- The curriculum is regularly reviewed and meets student's needs. It provides students with access to a broad range of subjects that contributes to their enjoyment of school and prepares them well for future. In addition, the range of extra-curricular activities offered provides students with opportunities to develop their personal and academic skills. As a result the proportions of

students not in education, employment or training post 16 has significantly reduced.

- There is good provision for career advice and guidance across the school. For example, in Year 10 a Careers Event supports students in making appropriate choices post-16, alongside a detailed follow up careers programme.
- The students' spiritual, moral, social and moral development is a strength of the school.
- The local authority provides an appropriate level of support for the school through regular visits from the local authority adviser, subject reviews and training when and where appropriate.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, including the quality of teaching. Governance has improved since the time of the last inspection and governors provide good levels of challenge and support. They have grown in confidence and increased their ability to scrutinise information about students' achievement carefully and ask challenging questions. They are particularly aware of the need to further narrow gaps in achievement between different groups of students. It is testament to the ambition and drive within the school that governors, along with school leaders, are not satisfied with the speed with which these gaps are closing and have made 'narrowing the gap' a major focus of performance management and committee focus. Governors monitor finances carefully including, the allocation of pupil premium funding to provide additional support. Safeguarding policies and procedures meet statutory requirements.

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	114293
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	430291

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	560
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Leonard Broxson
Headteacher	Graeme Lloyd
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2009
Telephone number	01207 232881
Fax number	01207 282922
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