

Longfield Academy of Sport

Longfield Road, Darlington, County Durham, DL3 0HT

Inspection dates 7–8 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement requires improvement. Students do not make the progress they should, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Teachers do not always use assessment information to plan lessons which provide challenge for all students, including the most-able.
- Not all teachers regularly check the quality of students' work, mark it, and provide written feedback to students so they understand what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers do not routinely ask questions which challenge students to explain their thinking.
- Students are not given time in lessons to develop their own ideas and explore these more fully without being directed by the teacher.
- Leaders and managers have not ensured that good practice is shared fully to further increase the amount of good and better teaching.
- There is not enough focus on the progress made by students from their starting points when checks are made on the quality of teaching.
- There is inconsistency in the amount of homework teachers set and how well they follow the homework timetable.

The school has the following strengths

- Students in Key Stage 3 who need additional help for their learning are making improved progress because of the support they are given.
- Teaching in a number of subjects, for example, art, business, design and technology and physical education is typically good or better.
- Behaviour is good. Relationships between staff and students are positive. Students feel safe.
- Recent improvements in students' achievements in GCSE history are the result of effective action by school leaders and the governing body. This shows that they have the capacity to drive further improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 part lessons, of which three were done jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors observed senior leaders giving feedback on the quality of learning and students' progress in lessons.
- Inspectors spoke to two groups of students about their learning in lessons, homework, and their behaviour and safety in school. Inspectors also looked at students' work across a range of subjects.
- Meetings were held with governors and academy staff.
- Inspectors took account of the 34 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), questionnaires carried out by the academy, and 21 questionnaires completed by staff. Inspectors observed the academy's work and looked at documents, including: improvement plans; data on students' current progress; planning and monitoring files; minutes of the governing body meetings; the academy's electronic portal and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Mick Hill, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Christine Kennedy	Additional Inspector
Julie McGrane	Additional Inspector
Diane Reynard	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Longfield is an average-sized, 11-16 secondary school. It became an academy in August 2011. When its predecessor school, Longfield School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged good overall.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average. This is additional funding for those students known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action and school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The academy leads the Longfield Academy Trust, which also includes Darlington School of Mathematics and Science and The Rydal Academy.
- Four students are educated off site at Rise Carr College.
- The academy meets the current floor standard which sets the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The academy achieved the Gold level of the Investors in People Award in April 2013 and also holds the Investor in Pupils Award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching so that it secures good or better progress for students, particularly in English and mathematics, by:
 - using assessment information to plan lessons which provide challenge for all students, including the most-able
 - regularly checking the quality of students' work, marking it, and providing written feedback to students so they understand what they need to do to improve
 - asking questions which challenge students to explain their thinking
 - giving students time in lessons to develop their own ideas and explore these more fully without being directed by the teacher.
- Strengthen the leadership and management of teaching by:
 - focusing on the progress of students from their starting points when checking the quality of teaching
 - sharing good practice fully to further increase the amount of good and better teaching
 - ensuring consistency in the amount of homework teachers set and how well they follow the homework timetable.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because, taking into account the standards they achieve when they join the academy, students do not make as much progress as they should, particularly in English and mathematics. Lesson observations and scrutiny of work show this is also the case for current students.
- Attainment at GCSE is not good enough. Overall, the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE subjects at grades A*-C is well above the national average and attainment is very high against this measure. However, the proportion of students, including the most able, attaining GCSE grades A*-A and A*-C in English and mathematics is too low. While attainment has improved in the last three years in mathematics, and is now improving in English, it is still below that seen nationally.
- Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, do not achieve as well as other students in English and mathematics. In 2013, the gap in attainment between these students and others in English and in mathematics at GCSE was equivalent to half a grade. However, the gap is narrowing for these students lower down the school because additional funding is being used increasingly effectively.
- Achievement for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is improving. Support for these students is individualised and focuses on reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, they are making improved progress and are now achieving as they should. This is ensuring equality of opportunity for these students.
- Students eligible for the catch-up premium in Year 7 improve their reading ability and make increased progress in English and mathematics. This is because they are given specific support focused on their needs in the new Learning Support Base and through the accelerated reading programme.
- The academy has an early entry policy in GCSE mathematics. The proportion of those achieving higher grades has, in the past, been below that seen nationally because students were not always ready to take the examination. The policy has now been rightly changed to ensure that students can achieve the highest grades.
- A small number of students spend part of their time at Rise Carr College. The quality of this provision is checked regularly and these students make expected progress because the courses they study are matched to their individual needs.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although much of the teaching seen by inspectors was good, and some was outstanding, too much teaching requires improvement because it does not ensure that students make the progress they should.
- Where teaching requires improvement, teachers have not used the assessment information available to match tasks to students' abilities so that all are challenged appropriately to achieve the rates of progress they should.
- The quality and frequency of marking is far too variable. Not all teachers regularly check the quality of students' work and provide written feedback so that the students understand what they need to do to improve.
- Even where teaching is otherwise good, questioning of students does not routinely ask them to explain their thinking. Where it does, students are able to respond thoughtfully and, as a result, they develop their understanding.
- Too often, students are not given time to explore their ideas more fully and their progress is hindered. This is the case when the teacher too closely controls the learning.
- In art, business studies, design and technology and physical education, the teaching is typically

good and sometimes outstanding. As a result, progress in these lessons is good. In the best lessons, tasks are carefully structured to challenge students of all abilities, questioning requires students to give longer answers to explain their thinking, and students are given the time to develop their own ideas.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the academy is good. Students are welcoming to visitors and cooperate well with each other. Inspectors did see some pushing in narrow corridors at times when large numbers of students are moving around. Senior leaders are aware of this and staff are effectively deployed to help manage movement at lesson change over times.
- Relationships between staff and students are positive and as a result, there is little disruption of learning because of indiscipline. When this occurs it is managed well by the teachers.
- Attendance is similar to that typically seen in secondary schools. Absenteeism is monitored closely. There are strong procedures for encouraging attendance, working with parents, and providing support where it is needed. Rates of exclusion are low and falling.
- Students feel safe. This is because there is a robust approach to ensuring they are safe. Activities are carefully assessed for risk, and care taken to minimise this.
- The academy has clear anti-bullying policies and students are taught about different types of bullying, such as cyber-, racist- and homophobic bullying. As a result, students are clear about who they should go to for help and confident they will receive it.
- Students participate in, and highly value, a range of extra-curricular activities, including those organised during enrichment week as well as foreign visits, regular sporting clubs and activities, and musicals. These support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Students have opportunities to contribute to the development of their academy, for example, representation on the governing body and through the Investors in Pupils Award.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management requires improvement because it has not yet secured consistently good progress for students in all subjects, particularly in English and mathematics. The headteacher is committed to doing so, and has the support of the staff in this aim.
- Leaders and managers monitor the quality of teaching. However, they do not focus enough on the progress made by students from their starting points. As a result, while they have succeeded in eradicating inadequate teaching, they have not ensured that it is consistently good or better.
- Training is well focused on the academy's priorities and reflects individual needs. Good practice is increasingly being shared, but not fully enough to ensure all teaching is as good as the best.
- Some parents express concern about the homework children are set. Inspectors spoke to students and staff about this, and looked at homework tasks on the academy's electronic portal and the homework policy. Students commented, and inspectors agree, that there is some inconsistency in the amount of homework teachers set and how well they follow the homework timetable.
- An improvement in A*-C grades achieved in GCSE history in 2013 resulted from effective action by leaders and managers. However, the focus on maximising the proportion of GCSE grade C's in this and other subjects has not been matched by the same priority being given to ensuring the most-able students attain the higher grades.
- The performance of teachers is managed well. Underperformance is tackled robustly and care is taken to link teachers' salary progression to the quality of their teaching.
- The curriculum provides an effective link between secondary education and further education, training and employment. There is a good range of courses leading to GCSE qualifications. The curriculum is under review to ensure courses continue to match the needs and aspirations of students.

■ The academy's safeguarding and child protection procedures are secure.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors know the academy well and are ambitious for its further improvement. They have a realistic view of its effectiveness and understand the issues around students' progress. They visit the academy regularly and monitor the work of senior leaders closely. They are prepared, on occasion, to question and challenge school leaders about the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
- Governors are increasingly confident in interpreting external reports about the performance of the academy, such as consultants' reports and examination results.
- Governors have supported senior leaders in tackling the underperformance of staff. They ensure pay progression is matched to performance.
- The academy's budget is very well managed. As a result, governors have been able to invest in the upkeep and improvement of the buildings. They have shown similar care in ensuring that pupil premium funding is used effectively. Consequently, the gap between the achievement of these students and others is narrowing lower down the school.

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	137222
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	413420

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	885
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Read
Headteacher	Susan Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01325 380815/6
Fax number	01325 366856
Email address	longfield@longfield.uk.com

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