

Prudhoe Community High School

Moor Road, Prudhoe, Northumberland, NE42 5LJ

Inspection dates 22–23 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Leadership and management are inadequate and behaviour and safety requires improvement because school leaders have failed to ensure that access to the school site and to all parts of the school's computer systems are secure.
- Since the last inspection senior leaders, governors and the local authority have failed to identify that the school's performance has declined.
- Leaders have not focussed their efforts enough on improving the quality of teaching in order to raise students' achievement which has declined since the previous inspection. Consequently, the school's overall effectiveness has also declined.
- Leaders do not monitor teaching and learning with sufficient accuracy and performance management arrangements have not been carried out robustly.
- Teaching requires improvement because weak and inadequate teaching has not been eradicated.
- Teachers do not always demand enough of students. In many lessons marking is infrequent and does not make it clear to students how they can improve their work.
- The governing body has not effectively challenged the school's leaders and has been too reliant on senior leaders for information on how well the school is doing.

The school has the following strengths

- Where teaching is good or better, students enjoy learning and make good progress. They are well-behaved in these lessons.
- Students feel safe in school and relationships are usually very positive. Students behave sensibly at social times and as they move from lesson to lesson.
- Students' attendance and punctuality to lessons are good.
- Achievement in the sixth form is better than in the main school because a higher proportion of teaching in the sixth form is good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors spent the majority of their time observing 33 lessons, four of which were observed jointly with senior leaders. Lessons were observed in a range of subjects and were taught by teachers across the age range of the school. In addition, inspectors observed senior leaders reporting back to teachers on the quality of teaching and learning and one inspector visited a number of classrooms for short periods to observe the written work of students and the marking and guidance given by teachers.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the leadership team, middle leaders, the School Improvement Partner and local authority ICT and e-learning advisers, the Chair and two other members of the governing body, and the organiser of the local authority alternative learning provision.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including the school's view of its own performance, external reviews of performance and standards, monitoring records, information about students' progress, improvement planning, students' books, minutes of meetings of the governing body, records of behaviour and attendance, and records relating to safeguarding and child protection. Inspectors examined the school's child protection and internet access policies together with the local authority physical entry controls and secure areas policy.
- Discussions were held with three groups of students about the quality of their educational experience and the standard of behaviour in the school. Inspectors spoke with other students at social times and one inspector met with a further group of students to discuss their work in English.
- Inspectors took account of the 39 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 31 staff questionnaires.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspectors were made aware during this inspection that serious allegations of a child protection nature were being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the incident were considered (where appropriate) alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

Inspection team

David Brown, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lee Northern	Her Majesty's Inspector
Janice Gorch	Additional Inspector
Colin Scott	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is likely to be of the opinion that this school requires special measures, because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- This school caters for students aged from 13 to 18 years old and is smaller than the average sized secondary school.
- A small number of students attend the Education Other than at School Service (EOTAS) alternative provision run by the local authority.
- The percentage of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is below 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 by the local authority).
- The majority of students are of White British heritage and few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is well below average.
- The proportion of students supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly below average.
- Few students leave or join the school other than at the beginning and end of the school year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure, as a matter of urgency, that:
 - an external review of site security is carried out and school leaders respond rapidly and in full to its findings
 - the school follows its policy to ensure that all students and adults accessing computer systems have a unique and secure username and password so that internet access and use can be monitored
 - the attendance of all students, including those attending alternative provision, is recorded accurately and in a timely fashion.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching so that it is always good or better, and thereby raise achievement, by ensuring that:
 - instances of inadequate and weak teaching and low-level disruption to learning are rapidly eradicated
 - all teachers have high expectations of students and use assessment information more effectively to plan and deliver lessons that closely match the needs and prior attainment of all students
 - there is a stronger and more consistent focus on encouraging students' enjoyment of reading
 - students are given clear, regular and helpful feedback on their work so they understand how to improve.

- Improve the leadership and management of the school, including the governing body, by:
 - setting clear timescales and deadlines for improvement, together with well-defined targets by which to measure success so that the pace of school improvement increases
 - ensuring that senior and middle leaders focus on students' learning and progress when making judgements about the quality of teaching and that teachers receive development points that help them to improve
 - tackling inconsistencies in the quality of leadership and teaching through more rigorous performance management and stronger accountability of staff
 - ensuring that governors develop the skills required to challenge the school more rigorously by taking part in and responding to an external review of governance.

Ofsted has made recommendations for action on governance to the authority responsible for the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement has declined since the previous inspection and requires improvement.
- Students join the school with attainment that is typically slightly above average and most make expected progress as they move from Year 9 to Year 11. Their achievement varies across subjects, although in most it is at nationally expected levels. The proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE qualifications at grades A* to C including English and mathematics has declined relative to the national average in recent years. Standards in the sixth form have also declined, but not at the same rate.
- Attainment on entry to the school is usually slightly stronger in mathematics and in science than in English. The school is unable to fully reconcile its early assessment of students' attainment in English with that provided by partner middle schools and steps by school leaders to ensure more robust transfer of information about students' achievement are not yet fully established. The school relies on a number of other measures of students' prior attainment, and these are not fully reliable in providing a convincing picture of students' potential, particularly in English.
- Progress in some subjects, such as English and science, is not consistently strong and varies in line with the quality of teaching that students receive. Although the support provided for a small number of students who need a great deal of help with reading helps them to make progress, not all of this support makes the best use of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) approaches, to provide students with strategies to improve their own reading. Despite the school's own evaluation of reading as a barrier to some students' learning, whole-school approaches to developing a love and enjoyment of reading and to strengthen students' skills as readers are uncoordinated and lack clear impact.
- Students with special educational needs progress at similar rates to their peers. Some students thrive on the careful, targeted support they receive, both in lessons and in small group sessions. A small number of parents wrote in praise of the support their children had received. However, students with special educational needs do not yet make consistently good progress because the school does not have effective systems for using a range of assessment information to track and evaluate the progress they make. The progress made by more able students is also not good as not all lessons provide high levels of challenge.
- Students supported through the pupil premium also make similar progress to their peers in most areas of learning. Although the school has had recent success in raising the achievement of this group of students, these improvements have not been sustained. Attainment gaps which had closed in 2012 have widened in the unvalidated data for 2013. The attainment of these students in English and in mathematics, in 2012, was equivalent to one half of one GCSE grade lower.
- Achievement in the sixth form remains good, because a higher proportion of teaching is more consistently effective than in the main school. The school send a high proportion of its students to higher education.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The overall quality of teaching requires improvement. There are examples of good teaching in all subjects, but there is too much inconsistency across the school. The monitoring of teaching lacks rigour and there is no school-wide approach to improving teaching which is supported by all senior leaders so that more is of good or better quality.
- There is some good and outstanding teaching where teachers have high expectations and build quickly on what students already know and can do. For example, in a very effective music lesson for Year 10 students, the teacher had planned a series of tasks which excited and challenged students of different abilities and rapidly moved their learning forward. In an outstanding Year 9 physical education lesson the teacher's high expectations were made clear to the class and the performance and progress of each student was reviewed by their peers and by the teacher

before they left the lesson.

- Where teaching is less effective, the pace of learning is too slow and does not demand much from the students. Teachers do not use their knowledge of students' previous learning to make sure work is set at the right level and as a result, too many lessons are based on all students completing the same task rather than in making sure students all make sufficient progress in their learning. Because their behaviour in lessons is good students still learn but not as much as they should.
- In mathematics, some students are held back from making faster progress because the teaching does not provide them with enough understanding of the rules and strategies they learn. Approaches used in some mathematics lessons do not provide good opportunities to explore and explain important misconceptions and make useful links to other concepts and mathematical learning.
- The quality of in-class support for students with special educational needs varies considerably and not all teaching assistants are deployed to good effect by classroom teachers. The teacher in charge of supporting students with special educational needs is not sufficiently involved in monitoring this aspect of provision, or in contributing to improvements to the quality of teaching provided for these students in mainstream lessons.
- Although inspectors saw some examples of helpful marking in students' books which identified what went well and set clear targets for improvement, the quality and frequency of marking varies greatly. Too much marking in students' books is superficial and does not indicate clearly how students can improve their work. The way homework is set is also uneven across the school. Senior leaders have developed policies to improve the quality of marking and homework but have not evaluated how well these policies are implemented or if they are making any difference. Not all teachers follow agreed guidance and some leaders of subjects are not doing enough to tackle poor or infrequent marking. Where teachers fail to give supportive feedback, students lack direction and are unclear about the teachers' expectations.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and students say they feel safe but weaknesses in the school's security of access to buildings and to computers means that behaviour and safety require improvement.
- The majority of parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire consider the school to be safe and students' behaviour to be good. The school's rules are applied consistently and fairly and any incidents of misbehaviour are recorded and followed up swiftly.
- Students feel safe in school and have a clear understanding of what makes an unsafe situation. They were able to talk knowledgeably about e-safety and the dangers of internet sites and chat rooms. Students are taught about different forms of bullying, including homophobic and racist bullying, and know what to do if they witness or experience it. Students whose circumstances might put them at risk are supported well by adults.
- Behaviour around the school and in lessons is generally good and students say they enjoy lessons where they can be involved in class discussions or practical activities. Some disruption to learning occurs in a small number of lessons when teaching does not capture students' interest or engage them sufficiently in their learning.
- The school has well established procedures to promote good attendance which is above the national average. Very few students stay away from school for long periods and the proportion excluded from school for short periods is below average and declining. Punctuality to school and to lessons is good and this reflects well on students' enjoyment of school and their positive attitudes towards their learning.
- Students who attend alternative provision have their attendance recorded but absences are not reported to the school until the end of the week. This, together with the lack of consistency in collecting school attendance registers in a timely fashion, means that student absence may not be recorded and checked quickly enough.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leadership and management are inadequate because the school's arrangements for safeguarding students give serious cause for concern and insufficient action has been taken to remedy weaknesses following a serious incident in the school. Senior leaders and governors have not ensured students' safety when accessing the internet in all areas of the school, as the systems to control and monitor their use are ineffective.
- Senior leaders and governors have not ensured students' safety, as the systems to control and monitor access to some school buildings are also ineffective.
- Leaders' understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school's performance is not accurate or insightful enough. Self-evaluation, although overgenerous in parts, has correctly identified weaknesses in teaching and achievement and these are being acted upon. However, action plans do not always have success criteria that are linked to outcomes for students. This makes it difficult for the school to measure the effectiveness of its actions.
- Systems for checking the quality of teaching have not been challenging or rigorous enough to ensure it is consistently good or better. Reviews of the quality of teaching are too generous and do not focus enough on the impact of teaching on the progress students make. Decisions about teachers' pay and progression are therefore not linked closely enough to improvements in teaching. Consequently, weaknesses in teaching and students' progress have grown over time.
- The curriculum, including that in the sixth form, is appropriately matched to the needs and aspirations of students at the school and provides suitably for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The curriculum contributes to the promotion of equality of opportunity at the school.
- At the time of the inspection, the school met all government requirements in relation to safer recruitment.
- The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers without the permission of the monitoring inspector.
- The local authority has had a light touch approach to this school and, as a consequence, visits have been infrequent and the local authority has been unaware that there have been significant weaknesses in several aspects of the school's work. The impact of the local authority's support and challenge over time in helping the school to improve has therefore been minimal, in part due to the fact that there have been frequent changes to the local authority representatives working with the school. Challenge provided by the local authority about the recent decline in attainment relative to national averages has lacked urgency. Following a recent safeguarding incident the local authority has failed to ensure that the school rigorously follows its policies for secure access to buildings and to computer systems.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is experienced and brings an appropriate range of skills to their role. Governors are highly supportive and proud of the school but have been too reliant on senior leaders for information about the work of the school and have accepted senior leaders' evaluations without questioning them in detail or understanding fully what they are being told. There is little evidence of governors holding the school's leaders to account, particularly in terms of students' achievement, the quality of teaching and in the performance management of teachers and senior leaders. The governing body has not ensured that policies relating to child protection and secure access to buildings and computer systems have been followed.

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	122351
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	430462

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	13–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	861
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	265
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eileen Burt
Headteacher	Iain Shaw
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2010
Telephone number	01661 832486
Fax number	01661 832859
Email address	admin@prudhoe.northumberland.sch.uk

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