

Southlands School

Beach Road, Tynemouth, North Shields, Tyne and Wear, NE30 2QR

Inspection dates 13–14 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.

- Students start school with a wide range of different needs, including learning difficulties and behavioural needs. Staff are skilled at recognising and providing for these needs and, as a result, students make good progress across the school.
- Students are rigorously assessed when they arrive at school and more-able students are offered the opportunity to study in a local high school as well as with their peers, thus ensuring that they reach their potential.
- The quality of teaching is usually good with examples of outstanding practice.
- Teachers often plan lessons which are interesting and exciting and enable students to learn quickly, as evidenced by the good quality of work seen in books.
- Students say they feel safe 'Because we are all friends, which means we look out for each other'. Behaviour is good both inside and outside the classroom. All students show courteous and considerate attitudes to staff, visitors and each other.
- Leaders and governors have worked closely together to sustain the school's performance and raise both the quality of teaching and achievement across the school since the previous inspection.
- Members of the governing body have a range of skills which means they offer effective support and challenge to senior leaders. Their work has contributed directly to the school's improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Key Stage 4 students do not make as much progress in English as in mathematics. This is because too little lesson time is allocated to improving basic skills, such as grammar and punctuation, and planned learning does not always meet the needs of all students.
- While the tracking of students' progress is undertaken regularly, the system used does not give staff clear guidance on progress made and students' current achievement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons and parts of lessons taught by 16 teachers. There were two joint lesson observations undertaken, one with the headteacher and another with the deputy headteacher. The inspection team, with a member of the senior leadership team, also examined the quality of work in the books of students from across the school.
- The inspection team held meetings and had discussions with pupils, senior leaders, members of the school staff and the Deputy Chair of the Governing Body. They also met with a member of the local authority.
- The inspection team took into account the views of 36 parents who made their views known through the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspection team studied health and safety documentation, teachers' curriculum planning, documents relating to the procedures to check the performance of staff and the school's system for checking students' progress.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Frank Cain

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Southlands School meets the needs of students with moderate learning difficulties. Twenty-one students who attend also have identified behavioural, social and emotional needs.
- Approximately one third of students is girls.
- The vast majority of students comes from families of White British heritage. A very small minority comes from other ethnic backgrounds.
- Just over half of students is eligible for the pupil premium which provides additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and those from service families.
- All students who attend have a statement of special educational need.
- The school has an on-site provision named EPICC (Extended Provision for the Inclusion of Challenging Children) which supports the needs of students with behavioural, social and emotional needs who attend the school.
- The school has a range of awards and accreditations including Healthy Schools and Creative Partnership Award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and subsequent attainment in English of Key Stage 4 students by:
 - ensuring that more curriculum time is dedicated to improving students' basic literacy skills
 - improving the quality of planning in a small number of lessons so that teaching meets the needs of all students.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - improving the system used for tracking students' progress so that it is clear to all staff how much progress individual students are making.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students start school with knowledge and skills typically well below those expected for their age because of their learning and behavioural difficulties. Staff are skilled at identifying and meeting their needs, so from these low starting points, the majority makes good and sometimes better progress. As a result, all leave at the end of Year 11 with a range of qualifications and accreditations. This represents good achievement.
- In Key Stage 3 pupils make equally good progress in mathematics and English. When students start in Year 7 they are all tested in mathematics and English. The results of this, combined with their Key Stage 2 results, enable staff to make an accurate assessment of their levels of achievement.
- More-able students are quickly identified and are offered the opportunity, through the school's inclusion programme, to study GCSEs at a local high school. This ensures that the needs of this group are met effectively and many leave with several GCSEs including some graded D and above.
- Through the school Moving On Project Key Stage 4 students are offered a wide range of different work-based options from childcare and photography to construction and cookery. Courses are delivered both at the school and in other locations. This innovative scheme enables students from both the school and other schools within the authority to spend time learning about the world of work and ensures that they make a successful transition to further education or work at the end of Year 11. As a result, all last year's leavers are currently in education or training.
- Key Stage 4 students also complete examinations in a range of different subjects. While the majority obtains Entry Level 3 in mathematics, fewer do as well in English, particularly in writing. This is because too little time is spent on improving their basic skills in, for example, grammar and spelling.
- Standards and progress in reading have improved in both Key Stages 3 and 4 since the previous inspection. This increase in achievement is due to leaders' continued focus on encouraging students to read, by introducing reading time each day.
- Students achieve well in mathematics across the school. This good level of achievement is boosted by the many opportunities pupils get to use mathematics in practical situations. For example, Key Stage 4 students run a weekly tuck shop where they prepare food for staff and students. Part of their learning includes calculating the profit made from this venture. A recent rise in the number of students achieving full attendance and receiving a free voucher to spend at the tuck shop has, in the words of one student, 'nearly bankrupted us'. Developing their calculation skills in this way also helps them to recognise the pressures within the retail industry and prepares them well for the workplace.
- Students who are known to be eligible for free school meals make as much progress as others. The school's current data show little or no gaps in the attainment of this group and others in the school. This is due to the very effective use of pupil premium monies, which the school has used to deliver extra support to boost students' achievement through one-to-one and small-group sessions.
- All groups of students, including those with additional needs such as social and emotional needs, make good progress in line with that of their peers and achieve well in English and mathematics because teachers identify and provide well-targeted extra help and guidance that meet their needs.

The quality of teaching is good

- The vast majority of teaching observed during the inspection was good or better and evidence seen in students' books and the school's records further support the school's view that the

quality of teaching is good over time.

- The majority of teachers is effective at using information about how well students are doing to plan future lessons. As a result, work planned meets the needs of the majority, including the more-able, and enables all groups to make good progress.
- However in a small number of Key Stage 4 English lessons work set does not always match the needs of students sufficiently accurately and progress slows.
- Teachers are good at making learning exciting and fun. The words of one student sum up the views of others: 'I enjoy school because every day I learn something new'.
- An example of this could be seen in a Year 7 French lesson in which students were learning how to introduce themselves to others in French. The fast pace of the lesson and humorous way in which the teacher engaged students ensured that they all participated enthusiastically, the majority using correct vocabulary.
- Teachers and support assistants generally plan work together. Assistants regularly support both the behaviour and learning of students by keeping them involved in lesson activities and helping them write things down. They also deliver catch-up sessions in the school's inclusion unit for more-able students who access GCSEs at the local high school, which ensures that this group does not fall behind its peers.
- The relationship between staff and students is a strength of the school. Students enjoy learning and are proud of their work. They are keen to answer questions because staff praise them and displays of work in classrooms and corridors increase their self-confidence and self-esteem. Homework is set regularly and promotes students' independent learning skills well.
- Teachers mark students' work diligently and effectively, which ensures that all are clear about how to improve.
- Lessons in art, religious education and personal and social education promote students' good levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour and safety are good. Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and they show caring and friendly attitudes to each other, staff and visitors. For example, inspectors were impressed by the number of students who, on the corridors, stopped to hold doors open for adults and peers.
- In lessons students are keen and eager to work and show positive attitudes to learning. However in the playground students feel play sometimes becomes too boisterous because there is too little to do, particularly at break time, although the majority understands that this will improve when the building work is complete and the new games provision is available.
- 'School is excellent. It couldn't be better', commented a group of students. This is clear evidence of the safe and happy place the vast majority of students feels school to be. Parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) echo this opinion. Rare incidents of misbehaviour are dealt with effectively by staff. The school's records confirm this.
- All students feel valued as members of the school community and that their views are communicated well to senior leaders. Those with identified behaviour, social and emotional needs behave well in lessons because their needs are supported well by staff from the EPICC provision.
- Students are clear about the different forms bullying can take. They feel that incidents are rare because students are made aware, through, for example, the school's Internet safety policy, of the effects bullying can have on others. They know where to seek help should an incident occur.
- Attendance has continued to improve and is above the average for similar schools. This is due to the school's firm approach to increasing attendance and the effective rewarding of those individuals who attend regularly.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the previous inspection the headteacher and senior leadership team have continued to bring about improvement in all areas of the school. Their clear focus has ensured that teaching and students' achievement have improved.
- This emphasis on improvement, coupled with a caring ethos which values all students equally, reflects the school's commitment to equality of opportunity for all students.
- Teaching is rigorously monitored across the school. Firm and successful actions have been taken by leaders, through the management of staff performance, to reduce areas of weakness.
- Students' progress is tracked regularly and effectively by individual teachers. However, the system which tracks students' progress across the school is not yet fully effective. As a result, the tracking of different groups is possible, but only through laborious systems which make the task more difficult than it should be.
- School leaders ensure that performance targets for staff link directly to students' achievement and targets within the school's development plan. Checks on the performance of staff are undertaken and leaders have used this information to make decisions on teachers' pay.
- The curriculum is good and is enriched by many visits and activities away from the classroom, offering students opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the wider world. Residential trips undertaken through the school's Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award schemes are described by students as 'very tough but very good fun'. These experiences increase pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well.
- Over time, the school has used sports partnership monies to provide training opportunities for staff in school and other schools to develop new skills in both physical education (PE) and health and nutrition. This has improved the quality of PE teaching and the health and well-being of students.
- The local authority regards the school's leadership as effective. Consequently, only 'light touch' support has been offered, and this has been appropriate.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - School governors bring a range of skills and experience to the governing body. Most have had appropriate training. They offer good levels of support and challenge to senior leaders overall. Recently, newly appointed governors have brought a more effective challenge on the improvement of students' achievement. This is due to their academic background and good levels of understanding of data relating to achievement. In partnership with senior leaders, governors have now developed an effective system for checking the performance of all staff which rewards good teaching and tackles any underperformance. They manage pupil premium funding prudently and this has enabled them to support eligible students well. Safeguarding procedures and policies meet current 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	108653
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	429957

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Laurence Sweeney
Headteacher	David Erskine
Date of previous school inspection	11 April 2011
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