

Northfield School and Sports College

Thames Road, Billingham, County Durham, TS22 5EG

Inspection dates 4–5 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Students do not make good progress and the school has been unable to build on the strong improvement in results seen in 2012. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics fell in 2013 to significantly below national averages.
- Progress for disabled students and those with special educational needs is not yet consistently good.
- Teaching is not always effective and too much requires improvement. Students do not always have enough time to respond to the comments made in the marking of their work.
- The challenge for the most able students is sometimes not high enough to ensure that they reach the standards of which they are capable. As a result, not enough students achieve the highest grades.
- Students do not have enough opportunities to improve their reading, writing and numeracy skills through work in other subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- There are well-organised programmes in place to support students who start to fall behind with their work.
- Parents and staff hold the school in high regard. Students feel safe and behave well.
- There is strong support for students with a visual impairment and, as a result, they make good progress.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, know where improvement is needed. They have the full support of staff. As a result, significant changes have improved teaching and achievement in the past year. Attainment is now close to average.
- A wide range of activities and the sport specialism provide students with memorable experiences. They excel beyond the classroom.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 42 lessons and parts of lessons. Five observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher and members of the leadership team. A work scrutiny was conducted jointly with four members of the leadership team.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, members of the leadership team, three groups of teaching staff, including middle leaders, five governors including the Chair of the Governing Body and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors spoke to many students in lessons, at breaks and during lunchtimes. They also listened to students read in Year 7 and spoke formally to two groups of students.
- The inspectors looked at a range of evidence including the school's improvement plan, the school's own evaluation of its work, data for tracking students' progress, students' work and documents relating to safeguarding, the quality of teaching and teachers' professional development.
- Inspectors took into account the responses to the school's own surveys, the 72 responses from parents to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 95 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

David Griffiths, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Irene Lavelle	Additional Inspector
Catherine Laing	Additional Inspector
Anne Smedley	Additional Inspector
Colin Scott	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Northfield School and Sports College is larger than the average secondary school. The number on roll has fallen since the previous inspection.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is slightly above the national average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for children in local authority care, those whose parents are in the forces and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Most students are of White British heritage. A few students speak English as an additional language and, of these, a small minority are at the early stages of learning the language.
- The proportion of students identified with special educational needs and supported through school action is slightly above average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school has Training School status for initial teacher education.
- The school has a specialist unit for students with a visual impairment.
- The school uses off-site educational providers from the local authority's Bishopton Centre.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding and reduce the proportion of teaching that requires improvement, so more students make rapid progress by:
 - ensuring that the challenge for the most able is always high enough to enable them to reach standards of which they are capable
 - ensuring a greater consistency in the quality of marking
 - allowing time in lessons for students to read through marking comments, make their corrections and write their own responses, so that they are more involved in helping themselves to improve.
- Raise achievement, particularly in English and mathematics, and check that all students make at least good progress, including the most able and students who are disabled or have special educational needs, by:
 - promoting and developing high standards of basic literacy and numeracy for all students, as set out in the school's policy
 - raising expectations of what students can achieve, especially the most able
 - improving progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because students have not made sufficient progress over time, particularly in mathematics. In 2013, progress in English, mathematics and science was significantly below national averages. Actions taken by leaders have improved progress considerably, with more students making the progress expected of them, but as yet progress is not good enough and requires improvement.
- In 2012, test results were rising but this was not sustained in 2013 when the percentage of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics was significantly below average. This was due to the underachievement of a significant minority of mainly lower-ability students, especially in English, who were not provided with the extra challenge they needed to perform well. Leaders have responded quickly to address this; as a result, attainment is rising and is broadly average, with more students on course to reach higher standards this year. Evidence in the school's records about current Year 11 students shows that achievement is improving across most subjects.
- Evidence gathered by inspectors from looking in students' books and visiting lessons showed that although progress is improving, skills in reading, writing and mathematics are not being fully promoted in other subjects. Students' errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation are not always identified in order for students to learn from their mistakes.
- The achievement of the most able students is uneven across subjects and overall requires improvement. In 2013, test results indicated the progress of the most able students was below the national average in English and mathematics. This is now improving; many now make the progress expected of them because of better tracking and support. However, this progress is not yet good because the most able students are not always sufficiently challenged in lessons.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs did not achieve as well as their peers nationally in 2013. School data show an improvement, with more students now making the progress expected of them. However, not enough achieve better than this and overall progress requires improvement. There are examples of some pupils making better progress, especially those supported at school action and school action plus and in Year 8, where progress is accelerating in English and mathematics. The small numbers of students who have a visual impairment are very well supported and make good progress.
- Reading is starting to improve, reflecting stronger teaching with additional support for individuals during registration. Effective leadership has put in place a whole-school programme to strengthen literacy and numeracy skills. This is beginning to have an impact on rates of progress across subjects and years.
- The school uses the Year 7 and 8 catch-up funding effectively. As a result, there have been improvements in students' confidence and attainment and in their ability to read at levels appropriate to their age. During the inspection, students in Year 7 were proud to have been selected to read and they explained with passion how the school has helped them to improve their reading skills. They spoke positively about the books they are reading and how, as a result of the support they have received from the school, they now read for pleasure at home. Differences in attainment between students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, and others are narrowing in both key stages. The very latest school data show a much smaller difference across the school. In Key stage 4, the difference in attainment in English and mathematics in 2013 was the equivalent of one GCSE grade. This reflects effective promotion of equality of opportunities for these students, although this is not always as successful for the most able.
- A very small number of students attend alternative provision outside the school. They are making the progress expected of them, and are well supported to achieve a range of qualifications and skills to prepare them for the next stage in their education and their future employment.
- Students make rapid progress in history. In 2013, GCSE results were above national averages,

particularly for the higher grades.

- Early entry was effectively used for some students in mathematics in 2013. The school currently does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although teaching is improving, it still requires improvement because it is not yet consistently good and there are aspects that do not ensure students make good progress.
- Students do not always have work that takes account of their ability. Consequently, they find work either too easy or too hard and the most able students have to wait before they are given more challenging tasks. Evidence from students' books shows that the most able students routinely complete work that does not stretch them. In a mathematics book, one student noted at the end of a task: 'This work is too easy.'
- Expectations of what students can achieve in literacy and numeracy are not always high enough and these skills are not consistently promoted in other subjects.
- Support for disabled students and those with special educational needs is not yet fully effective. Although staff ensure these students are included in everything the lessons have to offer, they do not always take into account their specific learning needs in order for them to make consistently good progress in all subjects. On the other hand, the support for the visually impaired students is based on detailed understanding of their needs and they learn effectively in lessons.
- Scrutiny of students' books indicates that marking and feedback are not yet consistent across all subjects. While the vast majority of students' books are marked regularly, the quality of feedback given to students about their work is inconsistent. Students do not always get the opportunity to respond to the advice or to improve their work. When students do have the opportunity to develop their learning in this way, they respond well.
- Students are often encouraged to deepen their understanding as they respond to challenging questions. Their responses are used well to identify those students who may be confused or need further help. Questioning was used to great effect in Year 10 in history, where students gained real insight into the effect of propaganda at the end of the First World War.
- The more effective use of assessment information has been pivotal in accelerating progress and improving teaching. Students are made more aware of their levels and targets and become more skilled at checking their own and each other's work.
- Homework is an important school expectation, and students have good facilities in the school to support their learning beyond the classroom. Students, mainly in Key Stage 4, respond well to the additional lessons at lunchtimes and after school. They value the personalised support to fill gaps in their learning and the tuition given for examination preparation.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They have positive attitudes to learning, and their interest levels and engagement in lessons are high. On the very few occasions that this is not the case, it is usually the result of activities not fully capturing their enthusiasm.
- The school has been undergoing an extensive refurbishment and rebuilding programme for a considerable period of time and this work is still ongoing. This has been managed extremely effectively and has not had a detrimental effect on the behaviour of students. Students are proud of their school. They take care of their year zones and the school grounds, which are free from graffiti and litter.
- Students conduct themselves well at the start and end of the day, between lessons and at lunchtime. Inspectors noted the positive relationships between students of all ages as well as between students and staff.
- The school is highly effective at developing student leadership skills through a strong student

council, a large group of peer supporters and sport leaders and ambassadors. This is having a very positive impact on the ethos of the school and the way students behave towards one another.

- Attendance is average and continuing to improve. The rates of persistent absence have reduced.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Inspectors interviewed many groups of students during the inspection, and they say they are happy and feel safe in school. Students say that bullying is extremely rare and that if it does occur, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively by caring staff. The school is rightly proud of its Anti-bullying Accreditation Award, Princess Diana awards and extensive Peer Supporters' programme. During the inspection, one girl who received the Princess Diana Award spoke with enormous pride about the work she does to support other students. Parents agree that the school deals with bullying effectively.
- Students understand the potential risks of alcohol, drugs and the internet.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management are good because of prompt actions taken to address the dip in 2013. This has made leaders recognise that high expectations are not enough and that they have to be supported by decisive actions. This is now the case and the headteacher, governors and staff now work hard to implement changes to raise progress from the point at which students enter the school. More effective transition arrangements with partner primary schools are in place to gain an accurate picture of students' needs as they start the school. As a result, support is provided as early as possible and this includes a summer school for vulnerable Year 6 students.
- Many staff completed the voluntary questionnaire for the inspection. They are overwhelmingly supportive of how well the school is being led, and their level of pride and enthusiasm was impressive. This is a testimony to the sense of purpose and ethos that senior leaders have created and to actions that are now moving the school forward.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching more rigorously and take prompt action where it is needed. As a result, teaching is improving strongly over time, particularly in mathematics. Weaker teaching has been eradicated. Other aspects that require improvement are recognised and receiving attention, although they are not fully resolved yet.
- The school's procedures for managing teachers' performance are effective in identifying where teachers need to undertake further development and where good practice can be shared across the school.
- Support programmes and wider professional training are closely matched to the needs of the school and individual staff. Teaching staff spoke very highly during the inspection of the excellent professional opportunities that are made available to them and the impact this is now having on the quality of their teaching.
- Middle leaders are becoming more effective because they have received bespoke training on the analysis of data and how to use this to bring about improvements in students' achievement. Heads of subject departments now identify any possible underachievement earlier than in the past. New arrangements for English are resolving the issues of 2013. Good-quality support activities, both individually and in small groups, are now in place. These are not yet fully showing an effect on examination results but are helping students, including the most able and those with special educational needs, to increase their progress.
- Monitoring of students' progress is more effective not only in identifying where help is most needed but also in holding staff to account for the progress of students they teach. Regular challenge meetings help staff to focus their efforts more precisely on what will improve students' progress and attainment most rapidly. This has led to students' fast improving achievement this year.
- The quality of the curriculum is a strength of the school. This is supporting achievement: both personal development and academic success. The wide range of additional activities on offer, alongside the school's sport specialism, provides students with many memorable experiences

and successes. For example, the school has a strong track record of local and national success in sporting competitions and it is proud of its table tennis team, who have recently become national champions. Sometimes, however, opportunities are missed to develop literacy and numeracy skills in meaningful situations.

- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is promoted regularly through assemblies, form periods and in lessons. Students across the school access a wide range of opportunities that enable them to develop their confidence and experiences, including by becoming peer ambassadors or student council members within the school and undertaking exciting public roles, such as deputy youth MP for Stockton, a post currently held by a student in the school.
- The spending of the pupil premium is planned well and is used effectively to tackle inequalities of opportunity, and a focus on improving attendance as well as achievement has had a positive impact on outcomes for students in this group.
- The local authority continues to provide effective support for the school. Partnership work is strong and the expertise of the school is used by the local authority in a number of authority-wide initiatives, such as the outstanding teaching and learning group and the initial teacher training steering group.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet all current statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are actively involved in the life of the school, which they know and support well.
 - They are determined that the dip in 2013 will not reoccur. They have extended their role in challenging leaders by analysing achievement data independently. As a result, they are in a better position to compare attainment with other schools and to ask questions if they identify any concerns. They extend this knowledge with regular visits and check on various aspects of the school's work. This means that governors are also well informed about the quality of teaching.
 - Governors are involved in performance management; they are well aware that some teaching has not always been effective and this has now improved. They ensure that pay progression is firmly linked to teachers' performance.
 - They have a good understanding of how the pupil premium is spent and its impact on improving students' progress.

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	111731
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	434590

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	1,369
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Les Wadey
Headteacher	Craig Walker
Date of previous school inspection	8 June 2011
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