

Wellfield Community School

North Road East, Wingate, County Durham, TS28 5AX

Inspection dates 13–14 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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.

- The achievement of students is good and continues to improve rapidly because of the successful and relentless drive by governors and senior leaders to increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching.
- Standards in English and mathematics have risen sharply and are now very close to the national average and set to rise further.
- Achievement across subjects continues to rise and any gaps in attainment between those for whom the pupil premium applies and their peers are closing.
- Teaching is mostly good with some that is outstanding. It continues to improve strongly due to the emphasis on professional development and the sharing of good practice between staff.
- There are excellent relationships between students and staff and this helps to build a purposeful environment for learners where all feel valued.
- Students feel safe and are very proud of their school. Procedures in place to keep them safe are exemplary. They speak highly of the support they receive from the staff and say that this is helping them to do well in lessons.
- Students are courteous and respectful of each other and staff and they respond well to the new curriculum pathways which help to keep their enthusiasm for learning strong. Their behaviour around school is good.
- Identification of students with special educational needs and the most able is now strong and support for them is ensuring equality of opportunity for all.
- Partnerships have been developed locally and internationally to enrich students' understanding of cultures and communities.
- The skills of leaders at all levels, including governors have been developed well and they are now able to drive further improvement across all areas of the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always provide work that stretches or challenges all groups of students, particularly the most able in some subjects.
- Students do not consistently respond to the good advice given to them by their teachers, meaning that their understanding is not fully developed at times.
- Standards in a few subjects are not yet reaching the levels expected.
- Some middle leaders are still developing their skills and their actions have yet to impact significantly in some areas.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 29 lessons across the school, including three that were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Formal discussions were held with the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders, four groups of students, staff and students at lunchtime and two representatives of the local authority.
- Scrutiny of students' work was carried out during lesson observations and additionally as a separate exercise to identify the current progress of students and trends over time.
- Inspectors listened to Year 7 pupils who participate in the reading programme as part of the school's approach to improve the standards of English.
- A range of supporting documents relating to students' progress over time, safeguarding and child protection procedures, minutes of governing body meetings and those relating to the school's own view of more recent achievement, teaching and future improvement were scrutinised.
- Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons, at break time, after school and in the school canteen as well as scrutinising the school's inclusion policies and procedures.
- The inspectors took account of 30 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 45 responses to the staff inspection questionnaire and a phone call from a parent.

Inspection team

Colin Scott, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Halford	Additional Inspector
Christine Kennedy	Additional Inspector
Peter McKay	Additional Inspector
Paul Rafferty	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- Wellfield Community School is a smaller than average size secondary school to the east of Durham.
- The highest proportion of students is from a White British background. There is a very small proportion of students for whom English is an additional language.
- The school currently holds mathematics and computing specialist status.
- The school is undergoing a major rebuild of premises due to a £7.8m investment in its refurbishment.
- The school holds various awards including The Diana Award, the NSPCC Anti-Bullying Award, Investors in People and the Young Carer Charter Award.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and the children of service families.
- The school makes use of alternative provision for a small number of students who attend the Durham Green School run by Durham local authority.
- The school is supported through a school improvement partner in collaboration with Durham local authority.
- The headteacher was appointed in the spring of 2012.
- The school has its own internal exclusion unit to support good behaviour and attitudes.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of educational needs is slightly above average but reducing.
- 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?

- Continue to increase the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding and further reduce those that require improvement leading to higher attainment for students by:
 - supporting teachers' systematic, effective and consistent use of data across all subjects areas to set work which is appropriate for all groups
 - ensuring that students clearly understand their current standards and exactly what they need to do to improve
 - further developing the skills of more teachers in their use of quality questioning to support further challenge for learners
 - continuing to develop the curriculum so that it further excites and engages students to develop a thirst for knowledge and a love of learning.
- Increase attainment in the few subjects that still do not reach the standards found nationally by further developing the skills of middle leaders to support stronger improvement in outcomes for learners.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students enter the school with attainment that is below average and leave Year 11 with attainment in English and mathematics that is broadly average. Attainment is continuing to rise. The proportion of students leaving the school with five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, is now much higher than in recent years and is very close to the national average. Progress made by students exceeding expected progress now compares favourably with the national average. This represents good progress in their achievement overall. However, despite this rapid improvement, in a few subjects, such as resistant materials and information and communication technology, some of the most able students do not achieve the highest possible standards of which they should be capable. This is why achievement is not yet outstanding.
- Students' attainment in English and mathematics is now much higher and in science it is improving steadily over time. In other subject areas, such as graphic products, students also do very well.
- In most of the subjects where progress has been less good in the past, leaders have been swift to take action to remedy the causes and improvements can already be seen. For example, achievement in science subjects has improved as a result of the actions taken by senior leaders.
- The headteacher has been quick to identify the areas of weaknesses across the school causing the inadequate judgement of the previous inspection and has implemented systems and support to correct this. These swift actions have reversed the decline with results already showing an improving trend in most subjects across the school.
- Students who are entered early for GCSE English and mathematics achieve well. Leaders consider carefully who they enter early for examinations and the reasons for doing so in order to ensure that students are able to reach their potential in those subjects.
- Students targeted for the Year 7 catch-up programme are making good progress to reach the same standards as their peers. Their reading skills are well developed supporting their chances of achieving higher results as they move through the school.
- Students who are supported by the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, broadly make the same progress as similar students nationally. The gap between their standards and that of other students in the school is narrowing. This additional funding is well used to impact positively on the achievement of these students.
- The school has become increasingly successful in reducing any gaps in achievement between groups of students. However, there are still some subject areas, for example information and communication technology and resistant materials, where the most able are not always as successful as they might be.
- Staff know students' needs well. The school has introduced clearer systems for identification of students with special educational needs, particularly at Key Stage 3. This has meant that the numbers of such students overall has reduced, although it is still above average. Programmes that the school has introduced, such as its 'fresh start', has enabled such students to make accelerated progress in their reading and writing so that they are better placed to succeed in a wide range of subjects as they progress through the school.
- The few students who receive their education off-site enjoy their learning, attend regularly and achieve well.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching is evident across most subject areas and this has ensured that overall standards are continuing to rise steadily, and in many cases rapidly. Occasionally, students' work does not appropriately stretch some of the most able students so that they consistently reach the standards of which they are capable. Sometimes, students lack sufficient support to develop their understanding further by responding to advice given to them

by teachers. This is why teaching is not yet outstanding.

- Teachers know their subject well and are enthusiastic in their approach to lessons. For example, in history, students arrived to the background sounds to the First World War trench warfare and immediately felt immersed in the topic they were studying. This worked well to catch the interest and attention of all students and deepen their commitment to learning.
- Students who were interviewed and those spoken with in lessons, commented about how much teaching has improved in the last two years. One Year 9 student remarked that he felt 'challenged now and the work isn't always easy but I know that when I get it right I've achieved well and I didn't feel like this in Year 7'. Other students interviewed were also very supportive of the quality of teaching that they receive.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well in the school. Support for students with special educational needs within lessons is strong ensuring that their rate of learning is equal to that of their peers.
- Students' achievement is at its best when:
 - students are appropriately challenged, learn quickly and acquire deeper knowledge
 - consistently high expectations of students prompt them to do well
 - there are consistent and frequent checks on students' progress and probing questions that encourage students to think more deeply and critically
 - established school procedures for marking and assessment are used to ensure that students respond to the resulting advice.
- Where teaching still requires improvement, this is mainly due to:
 - questioning that is not always structured appropriately to deepen students' understanding or challenge them to think reflectively
 - minor misbehaviour is not always tackled swiftly enough to ensure that students' learning did not suffer
 - activities that fail to challenge the most able students sufficiently.
- Much teaching supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well by allowing them to reflect on the subject within the context of real-world experiences. For example, in science there was a deep discussion about what would happen if the sun disappeared and this led to 'awe and wonder' moments by students as they realised the catastrophes that would befall the earth.
- Responses from Parent View show the overwhelming support of parents in their belief that their children are now taught well at the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The procedures in place to check the credentials of staff are meticulous and systems to record any incidents of bullying or poor behaviour are also strong. Similarly, the school ensures that all reasonable procedures are in place to ensure the safety of students participating in international visits such as those to South Africa.
- In practical lessons, students recognise how to be safe and this skill is extended to their understanding of how to keep safe when using online technologies. Parents who responded to Parent View are also overwhelmingly supportive in the belief that their children are safe in school. Students say that they feel safe in school and are confident in speaking to staff if they have any problems.
- Attendance rates at the school are now above the national average and persistent absence has fallen sharply. Exclusions, both permanent and fixed term, have reduced markedly so that they are now very close to the national average. Different groups of pupils, including those who receive pupil premium funding, attend as well as their peers.
- Some pupil premium funding has been used to support a new football academy at the school to target some pupil premium students whose attendance in the past has not been strong. This has

worked well in improving their attendance and behaviour overall.

- The behaviour of pupils is good. However, students occasionally display behaviour that leads to the slower progress of the class as a whole. Some learners interviewed also said that there are occasions, albeit rare, when a few students call people names. However, they say that when that does happen teachers are very quick to correct that behaviour. Where activities are not exciting and engaging enough to promote students' strong love of learning there is some low-level disruption. These are the main reasons why behaviour is not yet outstanding and, therefore, why behaviour and safety is good overall.
- The school has developed a behaviour and management policy that has resulted in a more consistent approach by staff to behaviour and far fewer instances of bullying. The school's own internal exclusion systems support the management of behaviour well. For example, one student commented that he believed, 'pupils know that if they misbehave they might get sent to the unit and they don't like that.'
- Students' behaviour to support their learning is usually good and staff who responded to the staff survey are extremely supportive of the culture of behaviour in the school. For example, one staff member commented that, 'students' attitudes to learning are the best they have ever been'.
- Teachers and students show a mutual respect for each other. There are many opportunities for students to take part in activities after school and during the school day, such as the new football academy. They say that they welcome the support they receive by staff both in and out of lessons and that they now feel more confident about their future.

The leadership and management are good

- On appointment, the relatively new headteacher promptly identified areas for improvement and this has already resulted in better outcomes, such as the GCSE standards in English and mathematics, a rising trend of improved progress across other subjects, higher attendance and a lower number of exclusions.
- The ability of some middle leaders to effect improvements in the progress of students varies in effectiveness. Most subject leaders have had a positive impact on students' progress but there are still some subjects, for example resistant materials, where attainment levels are not high enough or school policies, such as marking and assessment, which are not consistently applied by all teachers. Similarly, there are still some occasions when the challenge in lessons for the most able is not strong enough to ensure that they achieve the highest grades possible. This is why leadership and management are not yet outstanding.
- The headteacher's strong drive and purposeful vision have already resulted in a school community that is solidly behind the improvements needed. This includes 97% of the parents who reported in Parent View that the school is well led and managed and that they would also recommend the school to others.
- The quality of teaching and, therefore, the achievement of students, has improved markedly over the last two years. Inspection evidence supports the school's view that the overall quality of teaching has improved to good. This has been due to the relentless drive by governors, the headteacher and most leaders at all levels, to improve teaching. The leader for teaching and learning has been extremely dedicated to the improved performance of staff and records kept by the school ensure that they have a clear view of the standards of all and the impact this has on improvements in students' achievement.
- Opportunities to share good practice and to enhance the skills of teachers are common. The school supports the professional development of individual members of staff well, ensuring that the school has a pool of developing expertise.
- The specialism of mathematics and computing is not supporting the curriculum nor provision at the school. The school has indicated that it will not be pursuing this specialism into the future.
- Staff are keen to say how well they are led and managed. For example, one member of staff who responded to the questionnaire stated that the school had an, 'exceptionally motivated and

driven headteacher that promotes a strong ethos for learning’.

- The school’s own evaluation of its progress and future needs is extremely accurate and clearly targets how improvements can be made across many areas of the school in order to raise achievement further.
- There are rigorous performance management procedures in place. Progression up the pay scale is not automatic and robust practices make it clear to teachers about what it is they need to do in order to move to higher pay scales in the profession, especially in linking their performance to students’ progress.
- The curriculum offered by the school was not previously fit for purpose. The headteacher recognised this very quickly on her arrival and has introduced new ‘Pathways’ for students. This new offer is now more fit for the needs of the students and has already resulted in students that are now much more involved in their learning and supporting increased attendance, good punctuality and an improvement in standards overall.
- There are many opportunities given by the school to support students’ spiritual, moral, social and culturing learning. For example, the school operates an international programme with a school in Winterton, South Africa. Some Wellfield Community School students have visited the school in South Africa and helped it to develop classroom resources. This supports their understanding of world cultures well.
- Pupil premium funding has been used to give extra support to identified pupils in the classroom, to support their reading and to enable initiatives, such as the football academy, to improve attendance and reduce exclusions.
- The school and the governing body receive support via a school improvement partner commissioned from Durham local authority. Governors say they welcome this advice and challenge greatly and that it is as a direct result of this support, and that of the headteacher, that they are now at the stage of being able to identify clearly future needs.
- The school promotes opportunities for equality well overall. Gaps between the achievement and attendance of different groups of students, including those students for whom the pupil premium applies, in this school are small. Discrimination is not tolerated.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have previously not been swift to tackle underachievement and weaker teaching at the school. However, because of recognition of this by them on the arrival of the new headteacher and the support from the local authority, they are now clearer about what they are required to do to increase their abilities to hold leaders to account for the quality of teaching and the progress of students.
 - Governors demonstrate clearly the levels of challenge they now give to the headteacher and to other leaders across the school. For example, governors now have regular link visits to subject areas for which they hold extra responsibility. Minutes of governing body meetings and notes of visits accurately detail the impact that they are now having.
 - The governing body is passionate about its community and its students and staff. Governors now recognise the importance of high quality teaching and the impact this has on the progress of students.
 - Governors and the headteacher work closely and ensure that the ethos of the school and the vision for the future are driven throughout the whole school and the local community.
 - Governors ensure safeguarding meets legal requirements.
 - The school is currently in a deficit budget but strong plans are in place with the local authority to ensure that the school has financial stability within the next three years. They ensure that extra funding, such as the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up, are used effectively to improve outcomes for those students for whom the money was intended.

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	114315
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	425676

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	539
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Saiger
Headteacher	Linda Rodham
Date of previous school inspection	12 September 2012
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