

# Atkinson House School

North Terrace, Seghill, Cramlington, Northumberland, NE23 7EB

**Inspection dates** 25–26 March 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Atkinson House is a good and improving school.
- The headteacher, together with the senior leaders and governing body, provide strong leadership and clear direction for the development of teaching and achievement.
- Middle leaders work hard to track and analyse the levels of progress students are making.
- Student achievement is good. From their low starting points, students make good progress in the development of their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Teaching over time, and in most subjects, is consistently good.
- The curriculum is skilfully adapted to meet the needs and interests of all students and successfully promotes their understanding of British values, preparing them well for life in modern Britain.
- Sixth-form provision is good and enables students to make good progress over time.
- Students in the sixth form and those attending alternative provision gain a wide range of qualifications. They benefit from vocational and work-related placements.
- Students attending alternative provision are monitored closely and staff ensure they make good progress, have good attendance, are safe and are well cared for.
- The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Behaviour is good and well managed, and contributes positively to the learning environment.
- Students say they feel safe and enjoy school. Attendance has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is now above average.
- The school is very well supported by the local authority and held in high regard by parents.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is insufficient challenge for the most-able students in some lessons.
- The analysis and monitoring of progress by middle leaders are not always detailed enough to help plan effective learning.
- Marking is not consistently good across the school. It does not always tell students how to improve their work. Furthermore, students are not given time to respond to comments made by staff.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes and carried out joint observations with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke formally and informally to students about their experiences at school and listened to their views.
- The inspection team took account of feedback from staff questionnaires and responses to parental questionnaires issued by the school. There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, to include any relevant comment in the report.
- Inspectors also looked at documentation about students' progress, teaching and planning. The school's documents on safeguarding were scrutinised, together with records of attendance and students' behaviour.

## Inspection team

Maureen Coleman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Patrick Hargreaves

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Atkinson House School serves students between the ages of 11 and 19 years with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through pupil premium funding is well-above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- Almost all students are from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language.
- Students are drawn mostly from different parts of Northumberland and from other mainstream schools, as a result of referrals made by the local authority.
- A small number of students attend alternative provision at the Northumberland College in Ashington.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the attainment and progress of students further by:
  - providing even greater levels of challenge in the classroom so that all students, particularly the most able, do as well as they can
  - making sure that marking helps students to improve their work and that they have a chance to respond to feedback from teachers
  - ensuring the level of analysis and monitoring of students' progress by middle leaders is consistent across all areas to support effective planning for learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The strong leadership from the headteacher and governors, together with impressive team work among staff, have been instrumental in achieving good improvement in the quality of teaching and learning for all students since the previous inspection.
- Standards across the school have risen, particularly in literacy and mathematics. Students make good progress in each key stage.
- The curriculum meets the needs and abilities of students well. It is enhanced by regular trips, visits and visitors to school.
- Senior and middle leaders share the headteacher's vision. Together, they have created a culture where there is equality of opportunity for all. In addition, the school fosters good relations and tackles discrimination in all its forms.
- The monitoring and analysis of students' attainment and progress by middle leaders are accurate. However, this information is sometimes not detailed enough in all areas of the curriculum. In addition, it is not always used consistently to enable teachers to plan the next steps in students' learning effectively.
- The progress, behaviour and attendance of all students, including those attending alternative provision, are good and improving. They are closely monitored by the senior leadership team and this is a contributory factor in supporting student's spiritual, moral, cultural and spiritual development.
- Traditional British values of tolerance and respect for all permeate all aspects of school life. The school effectively promotes equality of opportunity, the fostering of good relationships and the tackling of discrimination. Students are, therefore, prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- Staff are excellent role models and display a calm, measured approach to behaviour management. This creates a learning environment where students are well supported and good learning takes place.
- Additional funding, the pupil premium for example, is used creatively to provide extra support for disadvantaged students. It is also used to enhance the curriculum and to provide a more exciting range of learning opportunities. This results in students being highly motivated to learn. For example, the master classes offered each week are highly effective and students enjoy them greatly.
- Careers guidance and advice are well managed. Students are encouraged to have high aspirations and ambition for what they can achieve when they leave school. Furthermore, transition arrangements to further education and work placements are well established and effective.
- The quality of teaching is monitored rigorously and performance management arrangements are robust. Staff are acutely aware of their accountability in relation to students' achievement.
- Parents speak highly of the school and feel confident to approach any member of staff with any concerns they have.
- Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements; they are well established and effective. Leaders ensure that there is a good understanding throughout the school of how to keep students and staff safe. As a result, incidents of bullying and discrimination are rare.
- The local authority supports the school well and has confidence in the leadership team to continue working on clearly identified areas of improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The reorganisation of the governing body since the previous inspection has enabled governors to use their considerable skills to support and challenge the school with confidence and rigour. They hold staff firmly to account and are highly skilled in analysing data on school performance and identifying areas for further development. This is evidenced in the minutes of governing body meetings where searching and probing questions are put to the school leadership team.
  - Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching and make sure that teachers are suitably rewarded for good performance. They are fully aware of how the school tackles underperformance in the classroom.
  - Many governors spend considerable time in school and this enables them to check much of the school's work for themselves. For example, they audited the school records about behaviour and the use of restraint to ensure appropriate policies and procedures were being followed by all staff.
  - Governors ensure that the school finances, including pupil premium funding, are spent wisely. They monitor the impact of this spending on the achievement of those students for whom it is intended.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are good****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is good. Most students, including those attending alternative provision and those in the sixth form, demonstrate positive attitudes to learning.
- In lessons, relationships between staff and students are extremely positive. This contributes significantly to students' learning, especially in literacy and mathematics.
- Students are well supported and guided to modify their behaviour over time. As a result of the careful, sensitive and constant attention from all staff, the school is a calm and purposeful place in which to learn and where students thrive.
- There are occasional lapses in students' behaviour, particularly when they first arrive at the school. Highly effective guidance and support are given by all staff to those whose behaviour gives cause for concern. Staff are well aware of students' individual needs and time spent out of lessons is kept to a minimum. A range of alternative choices enable students to continue learning, even when they are not in class.
- Students, staff and parents confirm that behaviour has improved markedly since the previous inspection and that the number of incidents of challenging behaviour has significantly reduced over time.
- Students are well aware of the high expectations staff have of their behaviour. They respond well to the reward system, which is managed effectively and fairly by staff, enabling them to gain points for good work and behaviour.

**Safety**

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Regular training keeps staff and students well informed about safety matters. The school ensures students know how to keep themselves safe, including on the internet.
- Students have a good understanding of all forms of bullying, including homophobic, racist and other forms of bullying based on prejudice.
- Students' attendance has improved markedly since the previous inspection and is now above average. There have been no exclusions since the previous inspection.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and has led to higher standards reached by all students, including those attending alternative provision, and in all key stages. Good relationships between students and teachers enable students to engage well in lessons and create a positive learning environment for all.
- Teaching assistants play an effective role. Working closely with the teachers, they provide good support for individual students and small groups.
- The teaching of reading, literacy and mathematics is consistently good, resulting in students making good progress in these areas of learning.
- Work in students' books, supported by school data and inspection evidence, show that teaching is typically good across all key stages and subjects.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have a secure subject knowledge and understanding of students' individual abilities. This supports students well from their low starting points to make good progress in literacy, reading and mathematics.
- Although the monitoring of students' progress is often rigorous and accurate, it is not used well enough by staff to provide realistic challenge in the classroom, for the most able in particular.
- Teachers check carefully how well students are doing during lessons. Skilful questioning and adaption of activities in response to students' understanding and engagement ensure they make good progress. However, marking does not always guide and support students to deepen their understanding or increase the pace of their improvement. On occasions, written comments are too repetitive and general, and have little impact on supporting students to improve their work further. Students do not always receive time to try and put into practice the advice they are given.

**The achievement of pupils is good**

- As a consequence of students' behavioural, emotional and social difficulties when they first join the school, their attainment is below average by the end of year 11 compared to other schools nationally. However, in relation to their low starting points, confirmed by detailed assessment when they first join the school, they make consistently good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and communication across all year groups.
- Aspirational targets and accurate monitoring and tracking of student progress, including those attending alternative provision, by middle and senior leaders, show the school's efforts are having a positive impact on progress and attainment.
- There is no significant difference in the achievement of students from different groups, including those known to be eligible for support through additional funding.
- The most-able students make good and sometimes outstanding progress from their starting points. However, the level of challenge for them is not consistently high enough across year groups and in some subjects to enable them always to achieve as well as they can.
- Effective and interesting programmes of study enable students to make good progress in relation to their starting points in all areas of the curriculum. For example, in a science lesson students were presented with a problem to create a structure to support a cream egg. This activity quickly engaged all the students, provided good cross-curricular links, developed their problem-solving skills and contributed to the preparation for the next stage of their education.
- Students' progress in developing spiritual, social, cultural and moral understanding is strong. They demonstrate creativity and the use of imagination in their learning. They are reflective and can offer reasoned views about a range of moral and ethical issues.
- The school prepares students well for further study and work in today's society. All students successfully gain a range of external accreditation and an increasing number of students gain GCSE qualifications, which enable all them to go on to further education and training.
- Students who are entitled to support from additional funding make the same good progress as other groups within school. This is because the school uses the funds effectively to provide quality support and enrichment activities for individual students. There are too few disadvantaged students to make any meaningful comparison between their attainment and the attainment of non-disadvantaged students nationally.
- Students' achievement in vocational areas, including those in alternative provision, continues to be a strength of the school, with increasing numbers of students attaining externally accredited diplomas in subjects. In English, mathematics and the use of information and communication technology (ICT), students make good progress. They benefit from effective support, good-quality resources and effective teaching.

**The sixth form provision is good**

- Sixth form provision was initiated at the start of this academic year and the programmes of study being offered by the school meet the needs of the current students well and are supporting good progress and achievement.
- Adults regard the students as partners in their learning. They involve them in the assessment of their work and in discussing their progress. This approach contributes well to the students' development of mature and positive learning attitudes and good behaviour.
- Students follow a programme which extends the vocational courses they followed in Key Stage 4, together with further courses in mathematics and English for those who did not gain a GCSE Grade C at the end of Year 11.
- A bespoke programme in ICT is also on offer to any student with a talent in this area of study.
- Students are able to undertake work experience placements in a range of venues and this helps them prepare for future employment and study.
- Students are offered many opportunities to develop independence and respect for others. For example, some are chosen by the school to be mentors for younger students. This is highly successful and provides opportunities for older students to demonstrate their maturity, tolerance and skills in helping and guiding their younger counterparts.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Students are motivated and focused on learning. Teachers plan well to meet the individual needs of students and establish good relationships built on mutual respect.

- Leadership in the sixth form is ambitious and strong. Leaders and managers make sure all students know how to keep themselves safe, achieve well and are prepared for life in modern Britain.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	132771
<b>Local authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	453559

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	56
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	4
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Anderson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Derek Cogle
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 March 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 298 0838
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