

Graham School Science College

Woodlands Drive, Scarborough, North Yorkshire, YO12 6QW

Inspection dates

3–4 November 2015

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Too few pupils attained five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, at the end of Year 11 in 2015. While pupils' attainment in English, and in English literature in particular, improved, attainment in mathematics declined.
- Although the rates of progress pupils are currently making are improving, not enough pupils are making the progress they are capable of because the quality of teaching does not yet consistently meet all of their learning needs.
- The achievement gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in the school, and other pupils nationally, remain too wide.
- The behaviour of the majority of pupils in lessons and around the school has improved markedly since the previous inspection. However, some pupils do not always arrive at school on time, and some turn up late to lessons. This slows down their own learning and that of other pupils.
- Persistent absence and fixed-term exclusion rates, though reducing, remain too high.
- Attendance rates for disadvantaged pupils remain behind those of their peers.

The school has the following strengths

- The school is well led by a determined and resilient senior leadership team and a strong governing body. There is a palpable and positive change in the culture and ethos of the school as a result.
- High levels of staff absence and ineffective leadership and teaching have been eradicated. The middle tier of leadership has been increased and strengthened. The capacity for further and more rapid improvement is good.
- Teaching and assessment is improving. Pupils report that they enjoy school more and have many livelier and engaging lessons. Older pupils say that they now understand why it is important for them to 'get an education'.
- Support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good, as is that provided for pupils who have previously disengaged from school. Outcomes for these pupils are improving strongly.
- Year 7 catch-up funding and pupil premium funding is now being used wisely, providing effective support for those pupils who have fallen behind in their learning or need extra help to strengthen their reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Pupils are kept safe. Their personal development and welfare is promoted extremely well. The most vulnerable pupils are particularly well cared for.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and ensure pupils make rapid progress in all subjects by increasing the proportion of teaching that is consistently good, by ensuring that teachers:
 - use the school's reliable assessment information to plan lessons that provide challenging work for all pupils and especially for disadvantaged pupils
 - plan more exciting and interesting activities that enthuse, engage and motivate pupils
 - provide more opportunities for pupils to extend their thinking
 - implement the school's marking policy consistently
 - put timely additional support in place when needed.

- Improve pupils' attendance and punctuality by:
 - increasing the attendance of disadvantaged pupils
 - reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent
 - reducing the use of fixed-term exclusions
 - ensuring systems to record and report lateness to school and lessons are in place and used consistently across the school
 - making sure that pupils are fully aware of the school's policies for ensuring punctuality.

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher and the two deputy headteachers have remained resolute in the face of significant challenge. They have provided the strong, decisive and sharply focused lead needed to overcome the barriers to change and improvement that the school has faced since the last inspection.
- The wider senior leadership team has been proactive in establishing clear expectations and higher aspirations among pupils, staff and parents.
- Middle leaders have also risen to the challenge. Their leadership has improved since the last inspection. They have been equipped with the right tools to hold staff to account for pupils' achievement and personal development. Most know their teams well and provide good levels of challenge and support.
- Self-evaluation and planning is thorough and accurate at all levels. There is a sharp focus on improving outcomes for pupils. Strong line management ensures that actions are monitored routinely and robustly throughout the year by the governors' 'rapid improvement group' as well as by senior and middle leaders.
- A full staff review and restructure has been completed. This accurately identified the staff and subject expertise required to drive up standards in teaching, learning and assessment, especially in underperforming areas.
- Around half of the teaching staff present at the previous inspection have left the school. A well-considered recruitment and selection process has been completed. The local authority human resources team has provided school leaders with good support throughout.
- The school now has sufficient well-qualified teachers with appropriate subject expertise to deliver its curriculum. There is a stable staff team for the first time in a number of years. This has reduced cover costs and the need for supply staff. Most importantly, it has minimised the disruption to learning that pupils experienced previously. Reliable tracking data confirm that these changes are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress.
- Rigorous performance monitoring underpins improvements and encourages dialogue between leaders and their teams. It is increasingly resulting in more opportunities to share good practice across the school.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff receive a good range of whole-school and individually tailored professional development to improve their skills and practice. Newly qualified teachers and overseas-trained teachers are carefully monitored and well supported.
- Good-quality information and data and effective leadership and management routines are in place. Systems to manage pupil behaviour, monitor the quality of teaching, and assess and track pupils' attainment and progress are rigorous. However, owing to the significant staff changes recently, a few staff are not yet familiar enough with the school's systems to use them consistently well.
- The monitoring and reporting of incidences of poor behaviour and attendance has improved considerably since the last inspection. Systems to identify, report and tackle punctuality and the small minority of pupils who are persistently absent are underdeveloped.
- The curriculum has been extensively revised. The changes made, and increasingly effective subject planning and delivery, are helping to capture pupils' interest and attention. This is making a positive contribution to pupils' behaviour, welfare and attitudes to learning.
- Additional funds to support disadvantaged pupils, as well as those who need to catch up in Year 7, are being used effectively. Senior leaders are taking firm action to address the legacy of underachievement. Nonetheless, they recognise that gaps in the performance of some pupil groups are not narrowing quickly enough in comparison to their peers in school or other pupils nationally.
- School leaders communicate and consult with pupils and parents regularly. The school's own evidence, together with responses to Parent View, confirm that most parents are supportive of the school and the recent changes that have been made.
- The local authority is playing an important role in supporting the school to drive forward improvement; most notably in English and mathematics. Effective links with a number of schools are helping teachers and teaching assistants to develop and share best practice.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have a wealth of relevant knowledge and experience. They use this extremely well to monitor the impact of improvement actions and manage leaders' performance.
 - Governors demonstrate a thorough understanding of their strategic role in running the school.
 - Governors visit the school regularly and have established firm links with senior and middle leaders and teachers.
 - Governors work closely with senior leaders and take decisive action when individual teachers do not meet high standards. There are clear links between the effectiveness of teachers' performance, pupil

outcomes and pay progression.

- Governors maintain strong oversight of the school's finances and have a clear understanding of how funding such as the pupil premium is spent and the impact this is having.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils are, and feel, safe in school. The school has benefited from the specialist expertise and rigorous oversight governors have provided. Staff have received extensive safeguarding training.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- While teaching, learning and assessment are improving strongly, inconsistencies remain in many subjects.
- Too much time is sometimes spent on directing pupils' activities with work that is not sufficiently motivating and which does not enable pupils to explore and deepen their understanding or contribute their ideas. In these circumstances pupils become bored and disengaged.
- Middle leaders and teachers are generally using school data and assessment information well to monitor pupils' attitudes to learning, and to track pupils' achievement and their progress against their targets. However, not enough staff are using this information to plan work that challenges all learners to do their best, identify underperformance, and put in place timely additional support.
- Pupils say that teachers' marking is helping them to better understand the progress they are making, but they are not always provided with opportunities to respond to feedback and improve their original work. Pupils report that they are provided with more opportunities to assess and comment on their own and each others' work. Where this happens they undertake this maturely and sensitively and value the comments made by their peers.
- Robust performance management and extensive staff development activities have been used effectively to tackle the weak teaching seen at the time of the previous inspection. Significant changes have been made to strengthen staffing, for instance in English and mathematics, and by appointing a new head of physical education. There are clear signs of improving outcomes for pupils in these areas, and in some other subjects, as a result.
- Careful planning usually ensures that the activities pupils are given meet their needs, and teachers set clear expectations about what is required. Teachers use skilful questioning to ensure that pupils respond positively and give of their best. Pupils respond well to lively and effective questioning and engage in animated discussion. Pupils reported that they 'feel much more aspirational and positive', and know that 'their contributions are valued'. They say they appreciate and understand that their 'teachers are there to support them if they take a risk or make a mistake'.
- An increased focus on homework since the start of the academic year has been welcomed by pupils and parents. It is too early to judge the impact of these new arrangements.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are increasingly positive about school. They report that they feel happier and enjoy lessons more because they are able to form more productive and secure relationships with staff and there are fewer disruptions to their learning. As a consequence, pupils are beginning to make better progress.
- Teaching assistants and pastoral support staff play an important role across the school and provide sensitive and effective support and care.
- Tutorials, the 'life skills' and 'growth mind-sets' programme, enrichment activities, trips, visits and thought-provoking assemblies all support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their personal, social and health education extremely well.
- Subjects such as geography, history and mathematics are also planned to ensure they make a strong contribution to the pupil's understanding of the wider world and promote the fundamental British values of freedom, observing the rule of law and equality of opportunity.
- Links with other professionals and support services are effective. Staff are highly proactive in tapping into these links to ensure that the needs of vulnerable pupils are being met.
- Overall attendance is improving and is now much closer to the national average than has previously been the case. Gaps in attendance between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are closing but remain too high. This limits the progress of this group of pupils in their learning.

- The 'turnaround' programme and the medical support team are proving successful at re-engaging those pupils who dislike school for a variety of reasons or who are at risk of being excluded from mainstream education. Despite this, persistent absenteeism remains too high because some pupils still do not attend school regularly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Too many pupils arrive late to school or amble unhurriedly to lessons.
- The rate of fixed-term exclusions, though reducing, remains high. This is because a small number of pupils continue to test the boundaries of what is acceptable behaviour both in lessons and around the school. Fixed-term exclusions are used judiciously by school leaders to ensure that poor behaviour does not disrupt the learning of others.
- The vast majority of pupils have responded to the clear and consistent expectations that leaders have set for behaviour. The behaviour of almost all pupils has improved as a result. Pupils wear their uniforms with pride, are generally polite and courteous and behave well around the school and in lessons.
- Almost all pupils understand the behaviour code. They believe it is fair and usually applied consistently by staff.
- Pupils know how to keep safe, including on the internet. Pupils feel safe because they know that there is always an adult in school that they can talk to about any concerns.
- Bullying is rare and dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils understand the harm that can be done through prejudice and derogatory language and report that this is tackled swiftly and rigorously by staff if it does occur.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Pupils enter the school with standards of attainment that are generally below the national average.
- Year 11 pupils who left the school in 2015 made inadequate progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. This is because the changes that school leaders implemented from 2014 onwards had too little time to have a positive impact on raising achievement and remedying the very negative attitudes to learning that many of these pupils had as a result of their poor experience of school.
- Provisional GCSE results for 2015 show that the proportion of pupils who attained five or more good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, declined. The gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and their peers in school and other pupils nationally remained far too wide. Pupils' achievements in mathematics, history, geography, combined sciences and vocational subjects were particularly weak.
- The school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- There were some pockets of stronger achievement and progress in 2015. Pupils' attainment in English literature improved significantly, and pupils did particularly well in physics, chemistry, biology and drama. The proportion of most-able pupils achieving A* or A grades at GCSE in both English and mathematics increased substantially.
- The emphasis on improving reading, writing and numeracy is evident throughout the school. Recent initiatives to engage teachers with the requisite experience to support younger pupils is beginning to have a positive impact; narrowing performance gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers across Key Stage 3, and helping a significant number of pupils get their literacy and numeracy skills up to speed in Year 7. There are clear measurable signs that this is having an impact on learning and progress.
- In Key Stage 4, tutorial time is used well to provide dedicated literacy and numeracy support. Pupils spoke eloquently about the difference that their breakfast and 'catch up time first thing in the morning' is having on their learning and self-confidence.
- Current assessment information provided by the school indicates that while more pupils are now making better progress across Years 7 to 11 in almost all subjects, the rate of progress remains uneven. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are currently making better progress on average than their peers. This is because of the carefully tailored support they receive. Similarly, the school's information shows a rise in the number of the most-able pupils aiming for higher grades such as by taking further mathematics.
- The school's careers advice and guidance helps pupils make informed choices about their future. Good information and support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs helps them make the right individual choices at the end of Year 11.

School details

Unique reference number	121675
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10004231

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,135
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Honor Byford
Headteacher	Helen McEvoy
Telephone number	01723 366451
Website	www.grahamschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@grahamschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 December 2013

Information about this school

- Graham School Science College is a larger than average-sized 11–16 secondary school.
- The school serves a wide catchment area and draws pupils from a range of socio-economic backgrounds.
- The school has two sites. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 attend the 'lower school', and those in Years 9, 10 and 11 attend the 'upper school'.
- The headteacher joined the school in January 2014. The school leadership and staffing have undergone significant change since the last inspection in December 2013. Of the 95 teaching staff in post at that time, 46 have since left the school.
- Nearly all pupils are White British. There are very few pupils speaking English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and children who are looked after) is above average and increasing.
- The proportion of pupils joining the school at other than the normal times is above the national average.
- A very small number of pupils, predominantly in Years 10 and 11, are educated off-site on a part-time basis at Yorkshire Coast College and Futureworks. They mainly study vocational course such as engineering.
- The school receives support from King James' School, Knaresborough, Scalby School, Scarborough Sixth Form College, Stokesley School and Yorkshire Coast College.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in a wide range of subjects in the upper and lower school. Seven lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Visits to classes in each year group were undertaken to assess pupils' behaviour and attitudes to teaching and learning.
- Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour around the school, and viewed tutorials and an assembly.
- Inspectors scrutinised and evaluated pupils' work in a range of subjects and year groups and considered this in relation to the school's information about the pupils' progress. Close attention was paid to the standard of the pupil's written work, including their spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- The inspectors met with leaders, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, the governor with oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements, and a representative of the local authority. They also met with groups of pupils to discuss their work, and spoke with many other pupils during lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors looked closely at a wide range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, senior leaders' improvement plans, and planning completed by middle leaders and teachers. They also looked at pupil progress tracking, records of leaders' monitoring of teaching and staff training, and school policies and procedures to safeguard pupils.
- Inspectors took account of parent responses provided by the school and the 44 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- The views of staff were considered, informed by the 48 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire.

Inspection team

Wendy Ripley, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Rajinder Harrison	Ofsted Inspector
Melanie Williams	Ofsted Inspector

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