

Whickham School and Sports College

Burnthouse Lane, Whickham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE16 5AR

Inspection dates	12–13 January 2016
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The progress made by pupils in mathematics is inconsistent. The most recent examination results in mathematics remained well below average.
- Some teachers do not make best use of assessment information. As a result, the most-able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged and pupils with special educational needs do not always get the right kind of support.
- Some teachers are too accepting of work that is untidy or incomplete. Consequently pupils' work is not sufficiently well organised to support effective revision for examinations.
- The gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school is not closing quickly enough. The school's assessment information for the current Year 11 indicates that the gap is likely to widen further in 2016. While the gap is narrowing in some subjects in Key Stage 3, the picture remains inconsistent across the whole curriculum.
- In recent years, governors did not challenge leaders early enough, when it was clear pupils were not making the progress they should.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have begun to reverse a decline in standards. They have put in place rigorous systems to hold teachers to account effectively.
- Pupils currently in the school, including those in the sixth form, are making good progress in English. Pupils have begun to make better progress in a number of other subjects.
- Pupils are polite, respectful and tolerant of one another. Relationships across the school are very positive and pupils feel safe.
- The sixth form is well led. Weaker areas of performance have been tackled effectively and standards on academic and vocational courses are good. Learners receive high-quality careers guidance and are well prepared for the next stage of education, employment or training.
- A high proportion of pupils choose to take part in the rich extra-curricular opportunities provided by the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - ensuring all members of staff use available assessment information to plan work that challenges the most-able pupils and supports those with special educational needs
 - making sure all teachers assess pupils' level of knowledge, skills and understanding more frequently during lessons, in order to determine when to move the learning on
 - providing clear feedback to pupils about how to improve their work
 - ensuring teachers insist pupils finish tasks and present their work neatly.

- Improve pupils' progress so that it is consistently good by:
 - ensuring leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment focus more explicitly on the impact provision is having on pupils' learning
 - improving the achievement and attendance of disadvantaged pupils, so that it matches that of other pupils in the school
 - addressing inconsistencies in the rate of progress pupils make across different subjects and key stages.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders have robustly tackled the issues that led to the decline in standards in 2014. They have managed the performance of teachers with tenacity and sustained rigorous checks on the quality of provision. They have focused intensively on those departments where standards of achievement had slipped and pushed ahead with necessary changes. In some departments, this has required a significant turnover of teaching staff. As a result of these actions, pupils currently in the school are making better progress, although inconsistencies still remain across different subjects.
- Leaders accept that they did not act quickly enough when examination results in 2013 and 2014 showed that pupils were not making the progress they should. However, since then, they have responded positively and they are securing rapid improvement.
- Staff across the school know that the bar has been raised. They recognise that the quality of teaching had slipped and share the headteacher's determination and drive for improvement. Teachers who do not meet the standards expected now receive good additional support and training. This has been particularly effective in raising standards in the English and science departments. The vast majority of staff are complimentary of the good professional development programme now provided by senior leaders and the improvements it is bringing about in their teaching.
- Middle leaders describe the last two years as a 'period of awakening'. They point to the much tighter management of teachers' performance and the focus on tracking pupils' progress as being instrumental in recent improvements.
- As a result of the regular checks they make, leaders have a sound grasp of the areas of the school's performance that need to improve. However, until recently, the recorded outcomes of these checks focused too much on checking teachers' compliance with the school's policies and not on the impact on pupils' learning.
- Leaders have adapted the curriculum to offer a greater academic challenge. Pupils follow a broad and balanced range of subjects in Years 7 and 8 before beginning GCSE courses in Year 9. A high proportion of pupils study a language and at least one humanities subject. In the sixth form, learners have access to a wide range of academic and vocational courses. The school provides particularly rich extra-curricular opportunities centred on sport and trips abroad. Most sixth form learners participate in the student leadership programme.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Through the citizenship and religious education curriculum, their social, moral, cultural and spiritual awareness is developed well. Other subjects and assemblies contribute effectively to pupils' personal development. During the summer term, the school suspends the normal curriculum for several days in order to provide more immersive learning opportunities and to utilise outside speakers. For example, pupils have worked with representatives from 'Show Racism the Red Card' and with survivors of the Holocaust. Last spring, the school ran its own mock general election to help pupils develop an understanding of democracy.
- Leaders are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and this is having an increasingly positive impact on pupils in Key Stage 3. However, additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and for lower-attaining pupils in Year 7 has not, until recently, been used well enough to narrow gaps in attainment. Information on the school's website about the progress made by pupils entitled to support through the pupil premium is inaccurate. Improving the attainment of disadvantaged pupils continues to be a key priority for the school.
- Leaders make rigorous checks on the suitability of adults that work in the school. In addition, all members of staff are regularly trained in safeguarding and child protection. Recently, all staff completed 'Prevent' training in order to raise their understanding of the risk of radicalisation and extremism. Parents and pupils who completed Ofsted's questionnaires stated that the school is safe.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors accept that they were complacent in the past and allowed standards to slip. In response, they have stepped up their efforts and demonstrated a high level of commitment. They know the school better now because they visit more frequently and hold regular meetings with members of staff. The headteacher provides governors with detailed reports which are scrutinised thoroughly. Governors now make good use of available information to benchmark the school's performance against similar schools nationally.
 - Governors, together with senior leaders, have tightened their use of individual targets in order to hold

teachers accountable. The rigour of their approach has been instrumental in addressing the weakest teaching.

- Governors took a hard line to stamp out the misuse of drugs by a few pupils last year which led to a number of permanent exclusions. Governors are determined to prevent this from resurfacing. As a result, the school sustains a strong focus on promoting good physical and mental health.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, over time, has not been good enough for pupils to make the progress they should. In the past, weaker teaching was not challenged effectively enough.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve or make good use of information on pupils' prior attainment. As a result, the most-able pupils are not always appropriately challenged. In addition, the needs of lower-ability pupils or pupils with identified special educational needs are not always met because teachers do not routinely adapt work to suit their needs. In some cases, the work provided revises topics covered in primary school unnecessarily.
- Some teachers do not assess pupils' level of understanding frequently enough during lessons and, therefore, fail to move learning on when they could.
- Teachers are frequently too accepting of work that is untidy or incomplete. Some pupils' work is not sufficiently well organised to support effective revision for examinations or to ensure they make consistently good progress.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, in line with the school's policy. In some departments there is some strong and highly effective practice. In these departments, feedback for pupils is specific and teachers provide additional tasks to challenge pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding. However, some marking, for example in Year 11 mathematics books, is less effective because it does not always identify what needs to be improved or provide pupils with next steps, in line with the school's policy. Some teachers do not challenge poor presentation.
- Many teachers display good subject knowledge and use assessment information effectively to plan pupils' next steps in learning. Most teachers prepare and provide pupils with useful resources. Lessons are engaging and sustain pupils' interest.
- The climate for learning across the school is very positive. Pupils come prepared and ready to learn and are keen to participate fully in lessons. They support each other well and listen readily to one another's contributions.
- Over the last two years, leaders have introduced more rigorous programmes to challenge and support weaker teaching. As a result, inadequate teaching has been identified and addressed. These programmes are successfully improving the quality of teaching in a number of departments. For example, pupils now make better progress in English and science because of the external scrutiny these departments have received and the training being provided to strengthen teachers' subject knowledge.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The school promotes courtesy, tolerance and respect positively. Consequently, the school is a harmonious community in which to learn.
- Supporting pupils' mental and physical health is a strength of the school. More-vulnerable pupils and those who struggle to manage their behaviour receive good support from staff in the school's Alternative Education Centre.
- The school has provided a strong programme of drug awareness in conjunction with the police following the identification of an issue with the misuse of drugs within the community last year.
- The physical education department promotes good physical health. Participation rates in extra-curricular sporting opportunities are high. Pupils enjoy physical education and take part in lessons with genuine enthusiasm.
- Pupils who completed the Ofsted survey said that they feel safe at the school and know how to keep

themselves safe. Staff are vigilant for signs of abuse or neglect and follow up quickly where they have concerns.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school site at social times. They adhere to the uniform policy and keep the site clean and tidy. Despite the ageing buildings, there is little evidence of litter or graffiti. Pupils are punctual to lessons and arrive with the necessary equipment.
- Standards of behaviour in lessons are good because most teaching provides engaging activities that pupils find interesting. However, some pupils do not take enough pride in their work.
- Levels of attendance are similar to those seen nationally. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school has declined, although disadvantaged pupils remain more likely to be regularly absent than other pupils. Staff in the Alternative Education Centre have positive relationships with pupils and are improving the attendance, successfully, of those pupils who miss school the most.
- Incidents of bullying are relatively rare and there is very little derogatory language. The school keeps good records of any such incidents and follows up quickly to ensure they are addressed.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment significantly above the national average. Despite this, their attainment in GCSE examinations in 2014 was only average. This was because pupils made poor progress in English, mathematics, humanities, science and languages. In 2015, because of the intensive work of leaders and managers, rates of progress in some subjects, particularly English and science, improved. However, pupils' progress remained weaker in a number of other subjects, including mathematics.
- In 2015, the proportion of pupils that made expected or more than expected progress in English, from their different starting points, was above that seen nationally. Pupils in the school currently are on course to make similar progress in English this year.
- Rates of progress were weaker in mathematics last year because the quality of teaching was inconsistent. Furthermore, the school's decision to enter pupils early for examinations was disadvantageous, especially for the most-able pupils. As a result, the proportion of pupils that made good progress in mathematics remained well below average. Although leaders are working intensively in the department, the progress of pupils currently in the school remains inconsistent in mathematics.
- Pupils currently in the school are making better progress, although this remains inconsistent across subjects and key stages. The school's own assessment information for pupils indicates a higher proportion of pupils are on track to attain five or more GCSE A* to C grades including English and mathematics in this summer's examinations.
- The most-able pupils do not make the progress they should in mathematics and languages, because the work provided for them is not consistently challenging enough.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make sound progress overall. However, in some subjects, pupils with special educational needs do not make the progress they should because teachers do not tailor the work provided for them sufficiently. Those pupils registered with the additional resource provision (ARMS) receive excellent support and thrive at the school.
- In the past, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils has been well below that of other pupils in the school. Current assessment information indicates that this gap in attainment is likely to widen for pupils in Year 11. However, for pupils in Key Stage 3, the gap is narrower in a number of subjects, because additional funding has been used more effectively. Leaders and governors are aware that improving the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils remains a key priority.
- Pupils who enter the school with lower levels of attainment receive additional teaching in English and mathematics. Assessment information shows that, currently, this has a greater impact in English than in mathematics, although most pupils find this support beneficial.
- At the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils are suitably prepared for the next stage of their education. Around two thirds of pupils progress to the sixth form. In 2015, only one pupil did not find a place in education, employment or training.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Consequently, the sixth form is the destination of choice for the majority of learners and attracts a number of learners from other schools. A high proportion of learners progress from the sixth form into higher education. In 2015, all learners found a suitable place in higher education, employment or training.
- As a result of good teaching and positive attitudes to learning, outcomes in the sixth form are good. Last year, on almost all academic courses, attainment was in line with or above the national average and attainment on work-related courses was significantly above average.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form is good. Teachers develop good subject knowledge because they specialise in particular topics and use this effectively to plan and deliver engaging and challenging lessons. Homework is used well and many learners stay on after school to complete tasks.
- The sixth form is inclusive and provides a broad academic and vocational curriculum. Learners who failed to attain a GCSE grade C or higher in English and mathematics receive additional specialist teaching and most resit the subject successfully. The curriculum meets the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programme. Learners all undertake a work experience in Year 12 and there is an effective programme of personal, social, health and economic education. Learners receive good-quality careers guidance and benefit from individual support and counselling.
- The school has well-developed links with local universities and provides specific help to ensure disadvantaged learners take the next step into higher education. Learners told inspectors that they receive good support with university applications. However, the most-able sixth form learners felt that teachers could do more to prepare them effectively for the challenge of university interviews.
- Learners' behaviour around the school and their attitudes to learning are exemplary. They provide excellent role models for younger pupils. They contribute greatly to supporting the school's activities and develop leadership skills by listening to pupils read, supporting pupils in mathematics and languages and acting as ambassadors at different school events.

School details

Unique reference number	137360
Local authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	10000447

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	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,590
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	300
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tom Hopper
Headteacher	Mr Steve Haigh
Telephone number	0191 496 0026
Website	www.whickhamschool.org
Email address	info@whickhamschool.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is a much larger than average secondary school with a large sixth form.
- Whickham School converted to an academy in September 2011 under the control of Whickham School and Sports College Trust. When the predecessor school was last inspected in November 2010, it was judged to be a good school.
- Around 95% of pupils are of White British heritage. Few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language.
- Around a fifth of pupils are supported with additional government funding, known as the pupil premium. This funding is provided for those known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below average.
- Upon conversion to academy status, the school took control of the additional resource provision for autistic pupils (ARMS). The facility provides places for up to 26 pupils. Currently, there are 14 pupils registered and attending the facility.
- The school does not use any alternative education providers.
- The school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors carried out observations of 38 part-lessons, of which a number were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. During these observations, inspectors sampled pupils' books and talked to pupils in order to evaluate the quality of current work. Inspectors also made shorter visits to a number of other lessons in order to evaluate the climate for learning across the school.
- Inspectors visited the school's additional resource provision for autistic pupils (ARMS).
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, middle leaders and a group of teachers. Further meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and eight other governors, an external consultant and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils informally and held more formal meetings with pupils in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, policies, assessment information and records of checks on the quality of teaching. Inspectors looked at minutes of governing body meetings and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors took account of the 142 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey and to the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors visited the school on 28 January 2016 to gather additional evidence.

Inspection team

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