

Tanfield School, Specialist College of Science and Engineering

Tanfield Lea Road, Stanley, County Durham DH9 8AY

Inspection dates

9–10 November 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils have declined since the previous inspection because pupils' progress has been inconsistent across different subjects. Although examination results showed improvement in 2016, the progress pupils made was still no better than average.
- The quality of teaching is too variable. In some subjects expectations are too low and the tasks set for pupils are too easy. There are too few opportunities for pupils to write at length.
- Assessment information and work in books show the progress made by boys is weaker than that of girls. Although leaders have begun to provide teachers with appropriate guidance, they have not applied it consistently enough to address the gap in performance.
- Not all teachers apply the school's marking policy in line with expectations.
- Although levels of attendance are close to the national average, there remain a number of pupils that miss school too regularly.
- Leaders and managers do not make frequent enough or sufficiently detailed checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, their evaluation of strengths and weaknesses has been overgenerous.
- Some middle leaders need further training so that they can accurately and honestly evaluate their areas of responsibility.
- The governing body has not made sufficiently robust checks on the quality of teaching or monitored the progress pupils make across subjects and year groups. They have not challenged weaknesses revealed in the school's tracking information systematically enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders can tackle weaknesses in performance effectively. The improvements made in the English department exemplify this.
- Safeguarding arrangements are highly effective. A culture of care and vigilance exists across the school.
- The curriculum that supports pupils' personal development is well planned and wide-ranging. As a result, pupils have an excellent understanding of diversity and equalities. They are highly respectful and polite to one another.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that pupils make consistently strong progress by:
 - raising some teachers' expectations so that they set more challenging tasks that stretch and challenge pupils effectively
 - ensuring that all teachers successfully employ strategies to improve the progress of boys
 - providing more regular opportunities for pupils to write at length
 - sharing the best practice in marking and feedback so that it has a more consistent impact on supporting pupils' progress
 - ensuring that all pupils know what their next steps are in order to reach their target grades.
- Improve attendance, particularly the attendance of those pupils that miss school regularly.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - making more frequent checks that focus on specific aspects of teaching, learning and assessment, so that leaders have a detailed understanding of what teaching is typically like
 - developing the skills of all middle leaders so that they can accurately evaluate and improve the quality of provision within their areas of responsibility
 - providing teachers with more precise guidance on how to improve the progress of boys
 - ensuring that governors have effective systems in place to check on the quality of teaching and learning in each subject and to analyse the progress pupils are making across the academic year.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has not developed and weaknesses in some departments' performance have meant outcomes have declined. The effective action of leaders and governors over the last year has improved the school's performance, although the progress pupils make across a broad range of subjects remains no better than average.
- Following the retirement of the previous headteacher in the summer, the governing body and local authority have put in place acting-headteacher arrangements until the substantive post is filled in the spring term. The acting headteacher is strongly committed to improving the school and has a sound grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, some judgements within the school's self-evaluation are overgenerous.
- Checks on the quality of teaching and learning do not take place frequently enough to fully establish the impact they have on pupils' progress. The school has provided training for middle leaders and they have begun to self-evaluate the quality of provision at a departmental level. However, further training is required in order to ensure that middle leaders use evidence to draw honest conclusions and hold colleagues to account.
- Senior leaders have sound systems in place to manage the performance of teachers. Teachers' salary progression is linked to the impact of their teaching and not all eligible teachers made pay progression last year.
- Teachers are appreciative of the training and development opportunities available to them. While some of this training is helping to improve the quality of learning, more precise guidance is needed to help teachers increase the progress made by boys.
- The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum. There are good arrangements in place to ensure that lower-attaining pupils receive additional teaching of key literacy and numeracy skills when they enter the school. Further additional teaching is provided in key stage 4 for pupils that continue to have gaps in their knowledge. As a result, a high proportion of pupils leave the school with good GCSE grades in both English and mathematics.
- A strength of the school is the quality of provision for pupils' personal development and welfare. Equal opportunities and an awareness of equalities are widely promoted through the curriculum, assemblies and focused days across the year. All members of staff model and promote values of respect, tolerance and kindness towards one another. Consequently, pupils are polite, respectful and proud of the school.
- Since the previous inspection, the attainment and progress made by disadvantaged pupils have been variable. In 2015 for example, their attainment was well below that of other pupils nationally. Leaders have successfully raised the profile of these pupils and staff have become more adept at providing disadvantaged pupils with the support and encouragement they need. In 2016, examination results for disadvantaged pupils improved markedly. In many subjects and across different year groups, disadvantaged

pupils currently in the school are at least matching the progress made by their peers.

Governance of the school

- Governors are fiercely loyal to and supportive of the school and strongly committed to ensuring that the community has a school to value. They are hard-working and give of their time generously. Governors make rigorous checks on safeguarding and make clear their expectations of conduct, behaviour and welfare.
- However, governors have been less effective in checking pupils' progress across the year and assuring themselves of the quality and consistency of teaching.
- New appointments to the governing body have strengthened its capacity to analyse key aspects of the school's performance. The role of new governors now needs to be developed so that their experience and expertise are fully utilised.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has an experienced and highly effective team that ensures that a culture of vigilance exists across the school. All members of staff are well trained and enact procedures correctly if they have a concern about a pupil's safety. Safeguarding leaders show dogged determination to resolve concerns. They work proactively with external agencies and have well-developed links with early-help teams and the police. Members of staff are quick to spot possible risks to pupils' safety. For example, inspectors observed members of staff ensuring that a pupil was accompanied home when leaving the school alone and in the dark after an extra-curricular session.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because it is too variable across different subjects and has not delivered consistently good rates of progress over time.
- Where pupils make less progress, teachers do not hold high enough expectations and set tasks that lack challenge. Some subjects rely too heavily on commercially produced worksheets which contain tasks that are too easy. Furthermore, some teachers do not provide opportunities for pupils to write at length and express their ideas fully. As a result, some pupils, including the most able, struggle to apply or articulate their knowledge properly.
- Pupils make better progress in a number of subjects, including English, history and GCSE physical education, because teaching is sharply planned and makes good use of assessment information. Tasks are adapted to meet pupils' specific needs and subject-specific skills are systematically developed. Pupils gain confidence and make strong progress as a result. Some very pertinent written feedback, particularly from English teachers, helps pupils to refine their work further.
- Pupils that enter the school with lower levels of attainment in English and mathematics receive effective teaching to help them catch up. However, lessons focused on developing pupils' reading skills do not do enough explicitly to build skills of inference or inspire a love of reading. Some boys told inspectors they are reticent to read to the

teacher in case they are overheard making mistakes.

- Some teachers have begun to employ strategies to engage and involve boys more effectively in lessons. Inspectors saw examples of teachers targeting their questioning well and a few teachers have begun to manage seating plans so that boys and girls have more opportunities to work together. However, in some classrooms, girls are far more active participants, while some boys are allowed to disengage, waste time and make slower progress.
- Most teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. Pupils arrive promptly for lessons, bring the right equipment and respect the teacher's authority. Most pupils take care to present their work tidily. Appropriate homework is set in line with the school's policy and makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning.
- Teachers and pupils are adapting to the school's new model of assessment. Most pupils understand their attainment targets, although some subjects are better than others at helping pupils understand whether they are on course to attain their target. Where teachers' marking is strong, pupils are left in no doubt about what they need to do to improve and are keen to act upon the guidance provided.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are respectful and tolerant of one another, as the school does much to promote diversity and equal opportunities. Pupils conduct themselves well, look smart and are unerringly polite because members of staff model these behaviours consistently.
- The curriculum helps pupils to stay safe and manage risk effectively. For example, pupils know how to use communication technologies safely because it is given a high priority across the curriculum. There are well-planned topics that promote pupils' physical and mental health and focus days are used to highlight particular themes linked to anti-bullying and the risks of extremism. Consequently, the promotion of safety is a strength of the school.
- Parents, members of staff and pupils raised no concerns about bullying.
- The school has a strong programme of careers guidance delivered across Years 7 to 11. The programme draws effectively on local businesses to raise awareness and promote routes into science, technology and engineering. A range of visiting speakers enhance the programme in key stage 3 and all pupils receive impartial careers guidance interviews in key stage 4. Form tutors contribute effectively to supporting pupils in developing the skills needed for job applications and interviews.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Very few lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour. Teachers apply the school's behaviour policy consistently and pupils respond positively to rewards for good behaviour and conduct. At social times, pupils also show good self-discipline. For

example, there is very little litter around the school site and pupils tidy away well in the dining hall.

- The proportion of pupils excluded from school for poor behaviour has varied from year to year and has, in some years, been well above the national average. More recently, leaders have focused on developing restorative practices that are successfully helping pupils at risk of being excluded to modify their behaviour.
- Overall levels of attendance are close to the national average and there is little difference between the attendance rates of different groups of pupils. There is a core of pupils, however, that miss school more regularly. Leaders are targeting this group and have brought about improvements for some of the worst attenders. The school has appointed a part-time attendance officer to address the issue, but further work is required to ensure that more of these pupils attend more regularly.
- The school makes appropriate checks on the attendance and conduct of the few pupils that attend alternative providers.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment in line with the national average. Over recent years they have made less progress than should be expected in a number of subjects. Although there was some improvement in the most recent examination results, rates of progress across a broad range of subjects remain no better than average.
- The school's own tracking data and the work in pupils' books show the progress of pupils currently in the school is variable. While progress is strong in a number of subjects, it remains weak in science, geography, art and German, because the tasks provided are not sufficiently stretching or challenging.
- The progress made by boys is weaker than that made by girls in a number of subjects and across most year groups. Leaders have identified this and have begun to provide training and guidance to teachers on strategies to engage and involve boys more explicitly in lessons. Some teachers have begun to employ these strategies effectively, but this approach is not sufficiently developed or consistent to ensure that gaps in progress close quickly.
- The progress made by the most able pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with that of other pupils in the school. The curriculum supports lower-attaining pupils effectively, as additional time to secure literacy and numeracy skills is provided across Years 7 to 11. As a result, the proportion of pupils attaining a good GCSE pass in both English and mathematics is well above the national average. Some subjects miss opportunities to stretch the most able pupils effectively however, as too many learning tasks in some subjects are mundane and simplistic.
- Levels of overall attainment dipped markedly in 2015 because outcomes were affected by a sharp fall in English standards. Effective action since then has strengthened the quality of teaching in English. Examination results in English in 2016 were considerably stronger, and were close to examination outcomes in mathematics.
- The progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils improved in 2016 to be closer to

that of other pupils nationally. Tracking information shows the progress of disadvantaged pupils across subjects and key stages is similar and often better than that of their peers in the school.

- The least able pupils receive additional teaching in their first year in the school, which helps most of them to catch up and addresses gaps in their literacy and numeracy skills.
- The few pupils that attended alternative provision made limited progress but did attain the necessary qualifications to take their next step. More widely, all pupils that left the school last year secured a place in further education, employment or training.

School details

Unique reference number	114293
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10019380

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 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	531
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Len Broxson
Headteacher	Christopher Maughan
Telephone number	01207 232 881
Website	www.tanfieldschool.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@tanfieldschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	6–7 November 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Tanfield School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or with an education, health and care plan is slightly above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor targets, which are the minimum

expectation for pupils' attainment and progress at key stage 4.

- The school has four pupils attending alternative provision. The alternative providers used are the Delta Independent School and Gap, which is run by the local authority.
- The previous headteacher retired in August 2016. Since September the school has been led by an acting headteacher.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons across all year groups, including a number of observations undertaken jointly with senior leaders. During these observations, inspectors sampled pupils' books and talked to pupils in order to evaluate the quality of their current work. In addition, inspectors scrutinised in detail a sample of work from pupils in both key stages 3 and 4.
- Inspectors also observed the general climate around the school at social times.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, a group of teachers, a group of middle leaders and groups of pupils from key stages 3 and 4. Further meetings were held with the chair of governors and five other members of the governing body, as well as a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation and transformation plans, policies, assessment information and records of checks on the quality of teaching. Inspectors looked at records of governing body meetings and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors took account of the 31 responses to the online survey, Parent View, the 48 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 35 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Chris Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Julie McGrane	Ofsted Inspector
Joanne Owens	Ofsted Inspector

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