

Sedgefield Community College

Hawthorn Road, Sedgefield, Stockton-on-Tees, County Durham TS21 3DD

Inspection dates

8–9 March 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Ambitious and determined senior leaders have improved the school's performance significantly since it was last inspected. Their relentless pursuit of excellence has systematically addressed weaknesses and sustained improvements in outcomes.
- Pupils make significantly more progress across a wide range of subjects than seen typically. Pupils thrive within a culture that promotes achievement and personal responsibility.
- The school expects the same level of application and commitment from all pupils. Disadvantaged pupils make excellent use of the additional support provided for them and attain similar standards to those of other pupils nationally.
- Teaching is well planned and challenges the most able pupils to give of their best. A high proportion of pupils attain top GCSE grades in a broad range of subjects.
- Teachers use assessment particularly well to ensure that they provide pupils with appropriate work. Levels of challenge are high and sustain pupils' rapid progress. Just occasionally, pupils do not get enough opportunities to discuss and debate topics of interest to them.
- Pupils do not give up. They apply themselves diligently, persevere and complete almost everything set for them. Lower-attaining pupils show similar application and respond well to the additional support they receive.
- Pupils feel safe and secure and are proud of their school. They take care of the school site and conduct themselves impeccably. Exclusion from the school for poor behaviour is rare.
- Levels of attendance are slightly above those seen nationally and are improving quickly for disadvantaged pupils due to the proactive strategies employed by attendance leaders.
- There are excellent arrangements in place to support pupils' personal development. These arrangements make a significant contribution to developing pupils' positive and responsible attitudes.
- Effective careers guidance motivates pupils to achieve the qualifications they need to take their next steps. A large majority of pupils progress onto appropriate further education courses. However, routes into apprenticeships and the region's employment sectors are less well developed.
- Governors provide effective strategic guidance and direction. They uphold the school's inclusive and aspirational values well through their scrutiny of the school's work. Under their governance, the school has grown in popularity and continues to expand.
- Almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire would recommend the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen links with regional employers in order to ensure that pupils are equipped with the necessary employability skills and can access routes into apprenticeships and employment.
- Create more opportunities to engage pupils in discussion and debate so that their understanding of the subjects they study and the wider world is enhanced.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher and other senior leaders demonstrate high levels of ambition and a relentless determination to address any weaknesses in the school's performance. They have skilfully guided the school's improvement since the last inspection through their pursuit of academic excellence coupled with a strong commitment to inclusion. Senior leaders model high expectations and professional integrity through their actions around the school, setting the tone for staff and pupils alike. Almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire stated that the school is well led and managed.
- Leaders have well established systems in place to gather detailed information on the effectiveness of teaching and learning, pupils' welfare and their attendance. They use this information well to target their efforts and are adept at measuring the impact of their work. As a result, any weaknesses in performance are quickly addressed. For example, weaker outcomes in French and history last year have been tackled.
- Over time, leaders have created a culture of research and reflection that nurtures the development of effective teaching. Teachers think deeply about their practice and draw upon the school's theoretical 'learning box' approach to inform their planning. Leaders are also acutely aware of the workload pressures on teachers. Leaders have done much to help teachers find a healthy balance by focusing their efforts where they can have the maximum impact on pupils' learning and progress.
- Leaders have high expectations and manage the performance of teachers robustly. Teachers are set challenging objectives linked to the progress of their classes and are expected to deliver results. Not everyone is awarded by pay progression and some teachers have chosen to move on from the school.
- Over time, the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils have improved and most now attain standards similar to those of other pupils nationally. Leaders check the impact of pupil premium funding carefully. If initiatives are ineffective, they are changed and funding is quickly redirected. Disadvantaged pupils benefit from considerable levels of additional support above and beyond that provided for other pupils in the school. For example, further teaching is provided for them during most school holidays and, in order to support good attendance, the school meets the cost of transport to school for those eligible for free school meals.
- Staff liaise closely with feeder primary schools to establish pupils' starting points and to arrange specific support for lower-attaining and more vulnerable pupils. The Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding is used well to provide additional support for pupils as soon as they join the school. Extra literacy and numeracy lessons are provided and particular programmes to help pupils with literacy are used to excellent effect. Special educational needs funding is also used wisely and supports the strong progress of identified pupils.
- The curriculum provides different pathways linked to pupils' varying starting points and interests. Around half of pupils currently in the school follow an academic pathway encompassing all of the English Baccalaureate subjects. Others follow a pathway that gives more flexibility and offers some more vocational options. A third pathway is carefully designed to meet the needs of lower-attaining pupils. The wider curriculum

has strong provision that supports the development of social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding. Pupils engage positively with a weekly programme of lessons covering personal safety, topical issues, careers and equalities. Almost all pupils follow religious education to examination in Year 11 and learn to value and respect different faiths.

- A range of extra-curricular activities is provided both after school and at lunchtime. Leaders are exploring ways to broaden the range of activities and increase levels of participation. There are good opportunities for pupils to visit places of worship and gain experience of other cultures, although, currently, there are no opportunities for pupils to travel abroad.

Governance of the school

- Governors strongly support the school's values and provide effective strategic guidance to ensure that they are upheld.
- Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses and have good systems in place to monitor the impact of leaders' efforts to address areas for improvement. They invite external scrutiny from the local authority and use reports and performance data effectively to challenge leaders.
- Governors ensure that everything possible is done to support pupils and prepare them for life in modern Britain. They ensure that there is a culture of good behaviour centred on personal responsibility and mutual respect. Consequently, the school is calm and orderly because pupils know what is expected of them.
- Governors manage finances rigorously, which has allowed them to add a new annex to accommodate the growing number of pupils applying to the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's website gives the safeguarding of pupils a high priority. Up-to-date policies are available and the school clearly sets out its expectations for visitors to the school. The 'red button' on the home page gives any pupil a quick way to report any concerns they have. Leaders make all necessary checks on adults who work in or visit the school and provide regular training to ensure that members of staff know what actions to take to protect a child. Members of staff are vigilant for the signs of extremism and know how to respond should they have concerns. Safeguarding leaders intervene early and draw upon the skills of external agencies promptly where necessary.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers use assessment information and their strong subject knowledge particularly well to inform their planning. They ensure that lessons consistently help pupils build upon what they already know, understand and can do. Consequently, teaching supports pupils' rapid progress over time.

- A well-established culture of research and development ensures that teachers have honed particular teaching methods and strategies. This provides considerable consistency of approach across subjects and key stages. The strongest practitioners in the school provide excellent support for less-experienced colleagues, and an open-door approach encourages teachers to observe one another and learn from the best.
- Teachers hold consistently high expectations. Their thorough planning linked to the specific requirements of new GCSE courses ensures that they set work for pupils with challenging subject content. Teachers are adept at helping pupils to develop the necessary skills to be successful in GCSE examinations.
- Frequent and varied approaches are used to check pupils' grasp of subject content. As a result, teachers have a thorough understanding of each pupil's strengths and weaknesses and use this to plan lessons that meet their needs. In English and mathematics, additional staffing ensures that pupils who need it receive additional sessions or one-to-one teaching to cover gaps in their understanding. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to supporting the progress of lower-attaining pupils.
- Pupils come to lessons with the necessary equipment and settle quickly. They move seamlessly from one lesson episode to the next with the minimum of fuss. As a result, lessons are productive and move at pace. Pupils' books reflect their hard work, as almost all tasks are completed and there are numerous examples of well-crafted and lengthy pieces of independent writing.
- Weighty pieces of homework are provided every few weeks. This encourages pupils to research independently and requires them to manage their time effectively. Pupils and parents appreciate the school's approach to homework.
- Occasionally, teachers' determination to keep lessons moving forwards means that they miss opportunities to explore issues through more open discussion and debate. When done well, pupils take the chance to explore difficult topics in a mature manner. In a Year 7 religious education lesson, for example, the teacher skilfully opened up and managed a debate in response to a pupil's question about Muslim beliefs of heaven and hell, linked to extremism.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The vast majority of pupils display positive attitudes and commitment to learning. They get to lessons promptly and apply themselves diligently, sustaining their concentration across the day. All pupils wear the correct uniform and conduct themselves impeccably. The school site is beautifully maintained and provides a positive, safe environment.
- Pupils are supportive and respectful of one another. They demonstrate maturity in their ability to cooperate in lessons and constructively assess one another's work. For example, Year 8 dance pupils worked highly effectively together to develop and critique their African dance routines.

- The non-teaching pastoral leaders provide effective oversight of each year group. They know their pupils well and monitor their behaviour, progress and welfare tightly. As a result, they provide effective support and guidance for more vulnerable pupils and those at risk of not making the academic progress they should.
- The school has a well-organised careers guidance programme woven into the curriculum from Year 7 onwards. Pupils maintain a 'careers passport' which records their future aspirations. This is revisited annually and informs discussions with an independent careers adviser. Annual careers events give pupils and parents the opportunity to meet representatives from local further education providers and from different job sectors. However, there are relatively few well-developed routes into apprenticeships or directly into the region's various skilled employment sectors.
- Pupils are taught about personal safety through the weekly lessons led by their form tutor. Key points of learning are reinforced through 'thought for the day' discussions in tutor time and through assemblies. Pupils can talk articulately about how to stay safe online and about topics such as sexual abuse and grooming. Leaders ensure that a broad range of topics linked to pupils' personal development and safety is taught and revisited as they move through the school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive strong support from the start. Teaching assistants provide skilled help during lessons to ensure that pupils have full access to learning. Children who are looked after receive additional care and guidance which contribute to their good progress.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. The school is calm and relaxed because pupils instinctively self-manage their behaviour. Pupils understand the school's behaviour systems and almost always respond to gentle reminders if their behaviour slips below that expected. This allows lessons to flow uninterrupted and for a relaxed and pleasant social atmosphere around the school at break and lunchtimes.
- Few pupils are referred to the school's internal isolation room. Numbers being referred to the facility have declined over time and it is rare that pupils receive fixed-term or permanent exclusions.
- The school does not place any pupil with alternative education providers, preferring to meet pupils' individual needs within the school. The welfare officer has a high profile in the school and provides programmes to help pupils at risk of disengagement to stay on track.
- Overall levels of attendance are slightly better than seen nationally in secondary schools, although the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has been weaker. In 2016, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who missed school regularly was well above that of other pupils nationally. Attendance leaders quickly recognised this and have implemented a raft of strategies, including some new rewards, which have had an immediate impact. Attendance data for this group for this year shows significant improvement.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Since the last inspection, the school has continued to deliver positive outcomes in GCSE examinations that compare favourably with national standards. Most cohorts of pupils enter the school with levels of attainment in English and mathematics that are well above the average. Good planning ensures that teaching quickly builds upon what pupils already know and understand. Excellent support is provided for pupils who enter the school with lower levels of attainment and teaching challenges the most able pupils from the start. As a result, all groups of pupils make substantial progress across key stage 3 and key stage 4.
- Leaders quickly identify and address any areas where performance is not as strong. For example, weaker outcomes in the past in history and modern foreign languages have been addressed and pupils currently in the school are making rapid progress in both subjects. A small number of lower-attaining pupils also made less progress in mathematics than they should have last year. Here also, the swift actions of leaders have ensured that additional support has been provided for pupils currently in the school to ensure that this is not repeated.
- Expectations are consistently high across the school and pupils learn to apply themselves and work hard. Their diligence and clear commitment to improving their work ensures that they quickly develop a secure grasp of essential knowledge and skills. Their progress in English and mathematics is consistently strong.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well because teachers expect just as much from them as other pupils. Well-considered additional support is provided for disadvantaged pupils who need it and this has a positive impact on their progress. In 2016, disadvantaged pupils made similar progress to other pupils nationally and the proportion who attained a good GCSE examination grade in English and mathematics was close to that of other pupils nationally.
- Lessons consistently challenge the most able pupils. The work in their books shows that teachers expect the highest of standards and provide challenging assessments to test pupils' ability to apply their knowledge. In recent years, the most able pupils have made significantly better progress than seen nationally across most subjects. The proportion of pupils attaining top GCSE grades was well above the national average in both English and mathematics. The school's own assessment information and the work in books indicate that the most able pupils currently in the school are on track to reach their demanding targets.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar outstanding progress to their peers in the school. Leaders have excellent arrangements in place to liaise with feeder primary schools so that each pupil's particular needs are assessed and appropriate support is arranged. Pupils who are looked after by the local authority are equally well supported and their progress is carefully tracked. As a result, they too are making similarly outstanding progress to other pupils in the school.
- The school's carefully researched additional programmes to support and encourage an interest in reading are skilfully delivered. Pupils clearly benefit from, and speak enthusiastically about, the impact of the additional support they receive. One pupil told inspectors that as a result of the programme he had followed, 'I can now read faster

and I understand more.' All lower-attaining pupils receive an additional literacy and numeracy lesson and regular small-group literacy sessions help them to address gaps in their knowledge and understanding.

- The vast majority of pupils attain the necessary qualifications to secure appropriate destinations in further education and many progress, in due course, onto university. However, a few pupils did not sustain their chosen pathway into further education, employment or training last year.

School details

Unique reference number	114317
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10023989

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	940
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Robinson
Headteacher	David Davies
Telephone number	01740 625300
Website	www.sedgefieldcommunitycollege.co.uk
Email address	school@sedgefield.cc
Date of previous inspection	27–28 February 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Sedgefield Community College is an average-sized secondary school.
- A small proportion of pupils belong to minority ethnic groups. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly larger than seen nationally. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need or with an education, health and care plan is in line with the national average.

- The school meets the government's current floor targets, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at key stage 4.
- The school does not use any alternative education providers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons across all year groups. A number of observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. During 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 some of the most able and some lower-attaining pupils in Years 7 and 10.
- Inspectors also observed the general climate around the school at social times.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, a group of teachers, a group of subject leaders and groups of pupils from key stages 3 and 4. Further meetings were held with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, policies, assessment information and records of checks on the quality of teaching. Inspectors looked at records of attendance, behaviour, minutes of governing body meetings and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors took account of the 75 responses to the online survey, Parent View, the 55 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 155 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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