

Wath Comprehensive School: A Language College

Sandygate, Wath-on-Dearne, Rotherham, South Yorkshire S63 7NW

Inspection dates

15–16 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders and managers have paid insufficient attention to making sure that pupils make strong progress across many subjects.
- Over time, the leadership of teaching and learning has been ineffective. Leaders have an incomplete picture of the quality of teaching and this hinders them from holding teachers accountable.
- Leaders at all levels have an inaccurate and overly generous view of how well the school is doing. The management of teachers' performance is ineffective and fails to hold teachers accountable for the work they are doing.
- Governors do not have a clear enough understanding of their strategic role. They are unclear how additional funding is being used or the impact this is having.
- Teaching is inadequate and leads to groups of pupils, including boys, disadvantaged pupils, the most able and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, making poor progress over time.
- Outcomes at both key stages 3 and 4 are inadequate. Large numbers of pupils are making poor progress in a wide range of subjects, including English, mathematics, history and geography. There is little convincing evidence that leaders are successfully tackling this.
- Plans for improvement are weak. Plans lack clear timescales for how and when improvements must be made. This makes it difficult for governors to hold leaders accountable.

The school has the following strengths

- The range of extra-curricular activities on offer is a strength of the school. Pupils enjoy and participate in a wide range of activities.
- Some teaching is stronger because teachers have high expectations and use questioning skilfully to develop pupils' thinking.
- Pastoral teams provide high-quality care and support for pupils.
- The leadership of the sixth form has improved and consequently students following vocational pathways make good progress.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently and rapidly improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, so pupils make good progress, by making sure that:
 - leaders develop a coherent picture of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the whole school
 - senior leaders regularly hold all subject leaders and teachers accountable for the improvements that need to be made to teaching, learning and assessment
 - self-evaluation is accurate and gives greater weight and focus to pupils' progress
 - accurate self-evaluation informs school and departmental improvement plans, leading to clear, measurable and time-specific improvements
 - middle leaders play an effective role in improving the quality of teaching and hold teachers accountable for the progress pupils make
 - performance management arrangements hold teachers to account for the impact they are having on pupils' progress
 - all pupils develop a good understanding of different faiths and beliefs in modern British society
 - governors carry out their statutory duties and improve their strategic role in challenging school leaders to rapidly and successfully tackle weaknesses
 - external support provides greater levels of challenge and scrutiny as to the impact leaders are having.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers have high expectations of all pupils
 - good use is made of assessment information so that teaching over time leads to good progress for all groups of pupils, including the most able, the disadvantaged, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and boys
 - questioning is used effectively to check and challenge pupils' understanding of the topics they are studying
 - additional adults play an effective role in supporting and challenging pupils in class
 - successful strategies to improve teaching are more effectively shared and adopted to improve teaching.

- Improve the behaviour and attendance of pupils by:
 - continuing to reduce the numbers of pupils who are absent or persistently absent from school so that they are at least in line with national averages
 - continuing to reduce the number of pupils who are excluded from school so that they are at least in line with national averages
 - improving the punctuality of pupils to lessons and registrations for particular year groups
 - ensuring that all teachers consistently tackle low-level disruption so that pupils can get on with learning
 - making sure that there is more effective supervision around the school, particularly at the change of lessons, break and lunchtimes.
- Further improve aspects of safeguarding by ensuring that:
 - accident logs are carefully analysed for any potential lessons that can be learned to improve pupil safety in and around school
 - school leaders work with other agencies and professionals to ensure that child protection plans contain clear and quantifiable targets for improving the lives of these pupils
 - the single central record is regularly updated to ensure that the latest information and checks on staff are centrally recorded.
- Continue to improve sixth-form provision so that:
 - students, especially the most able and girls, following academic courses make at least good progress
 - careers information, advice and guidance is effective, especially for those students wishing to follow employment or apprenticeship pathways.

External reviews of governance and of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leadership and management are inadequate because pupils, especially disadvantaged, middle-ability and most-able pupils, have made poor progress over time. Leaders have failed to tackle these long-term weaknesses and there is little convincing evidence that they have the capacity to improve this situation.
- The school's self-evaluation shows that leaders are out of touch with what is actually happening in school. Leaders believe that the poor progress of different groups of pupils in 2016 was 'unique'. This is far from the case. Progress of pupils has been weak for a number of years and leaders have failed to tackle these weaknesses.
- Over time, the leadership of teaching has been poor. Leaders have a partial and incomplete picture of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. The checks leaders make on teaching are weak, infrequent and superficial. As a result, leaders at all levels have an over-inflated view of how well the school is doing despite the progress of different groups of pupils being weak for several years. A new deputy headteacher, now leading this area, has taken some steps to address weaknesses but has been hamstrung by the decision taken by other leaders for this monitoring to be on a voluntary basis.
- Plans for improvement are weak and are failing to have an impact. Actions are unclear and imprecise and often have vague timescales for when improvements need to happen. This makes it extremely difficult for leaders and governors to hold others to account.
- Middle leadership is weak and ineffective. Along with senior leaders, middle leaders have paid scant regard to the progress pupils are making when judging the effectiveness of their work. In the face of compelling evidence over a number of years, which shows weak pupil progress, middle leaders have not been effectively challenged in their views that pupils are doing well and that teaching is good.
- Leaders are not using performance management arrangements to challenge and improve teachers' performance. Targets set for teachers are of variable quality and it is often difficult to judge whether teachers have met these imprecise targets. Hence, there is not a clear link between performance management and salary progression.
- Leaders invest a considerable amount of money, time and effort in teachers' professional development. This includes teachers seeing another teacher in school teach, visiting other schools to see effective practice and attending training courses to improve teaching. However, due to the weak and ineffective checks made on teaching, leaders have little evidence that this is having the desired impact on pupils' learning.
- Leaders have designed a curriculum that is broad and balanced. It provides pupils at key stage 4 with a range of 'pathways' they can follow. The curriculum is not taught well enough and so groups of pupils fail to make good progress in a wide range of subjects, including English, mathematics, history and geography. As a result, not all pupils have an equal opportunity to do well, and those who are disadvantaged, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and boys often make inadequate

progress and do not get a good deal.

- The curriculum is not designed well enough to help all pupils understand and appreciate different faiths in modern Britain. However, it is stronger in terms of developing social, moral and cultural awareness through a rich and varied extra-curricular programme. Pupils enjoy the range of clubs on offer, including a variety of sports, arts and crafts, and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and have opportunities to meet holocaust survivors and visit the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre.
- Parental views on leadership and management are mixed. A number of parents rightly raised concerns about the progress that particular groups of pupils were making. Other parents acknowledged the strengths of the pastoral care and extra-curricular activities that the school provided. Staff views are also mixed. A number of staff raise concerns about the progress the school has made since the previous inspection but state that they are proud to be part of the school.
- The external support provided by the local authority has been 'light touch'. This has not been good enough. Local authority officers have been slow to spot the serious issues in relation to the progress pupils are making over time. As a result, their categorisation that the school remains 'good' is inaccurate and unhelpful.
- Newly and recently qualified teachers were positive in terms of the help, support and guidance they have been given since joining the school.
- Leaders have made poor use of additional funding. Despite considerable additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, their progress remains inadequate. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have made poor progress and Year 7 pupils who need to catch up with other pupils are not making enough progress.

Governance of the school

- Governance is inadequate because governors do not have a clear enough understanding of their strategic role in holding school leaders to account. As a result, they do not fully appreciate the extent to which the school is failing to meet the needs of all its pupils.
- Governors are not involved enough in the school's self-evaluation and are not challenging leaders' judgements. This leads them to believe that the school is doing a good job overall. Along with other leaders in the school, governors have not had the issue of pupil progress on their radar. It was only in 2016 that leaders identified this as being a serious failing in the school.
- The various school improvement plans are not helping governors hold leaders at all levels to account for the impact of their work. Vague and imprecise actions mean that it is difficult for governors to judge whether enough progress is being made. There are few measurable milestones along the way to help governors judge whether leaders are improving the progress pupils are making.
- Governors have some awareness of how some additional funding is being spent but have a weak grasp of the impact this is having on a wide range of pupils. Governors do not have a firm enough handle on how funding for looked after children is being used, and do not know how additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs

and/or disabilities is being used to try and improve outcomes.

- Governing body minutes show that there are times when governors ask some well-targeted and challenging questions, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching and learning. However, governors are not persistent enough in their questioning of leaders to make sure that clear next steps are agreed, followed through and evaluated in future meetings.
- The governing body is not meeting its statutory requirements to ensure that the pupil premium policy on the school website clearly shows how additional funding has been spent and the lessons that have been learned to inform future spending. The pupil premium plan does not clearly show what the specific barriers to learning are for current pupils, how additional funding will be used specifically to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils or precisely the intended impact of this work.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The designated safeguarding lead provides regular training and updates to staff. Staff have found these sessions helpful and eye-opening, and recent training has covered issues related to child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and forced marriages.
- Child protection files sampled showed that staff ensured that case files were up to date with clear details of actions taken and when contact was made with various agencies and other professionals.
- The plans for supporting children looked after contain clear and measurable targets, often related to achievement and attendance, that would help leaders, other agencies and professionals evaluate the impact of their work. Child protection plans are not as clear in setting clear and quantifiable targets for pupils.
- The single central record meets requirements. However, during the course of the inspection, additional work was needed to ensure that checks that had been made on volunteers, some governors and peripatetic staff were recorded centrally.
- Leaders regularly record any accidents or incidents that occur in school. However, leaders do not analyse this information carefully enough to look for any trends, themes or issues that they can address to improve the safety of pupils.
- Risk assessments of the site have been completed, but inspection evidence supports staff comments that there needs to be better supervision of the site.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching is inadequate because particular groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, middle- and high-prior-attaining pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, significantly underachieve due to teaching not meeting their needs.
- In too many classrooms, teachers' expectations are too low. The quality of questioning is often ineffective and fails to help pupils think carefully about what they are studying,

leading to brief and weak pupil responses.

- Teachers do not challenge pupils effectively or consistently when they present scruffy and careless work. Diagrams are often haphazardly drawn, rulers are not regularly used to underline work, and spelling errors often continue to be made once they have been highlighted by teachers. This does little to accelerate the progress pupils are making in their literacy.
- Teachers do not consistently use assessment information to ensure that teaching over time is challenging for all groups of pupils. Not enough attention is given to what pupils have achieved at the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics. As a result, pupils are often asked to complete work and activities that lack challenge and do not help them make faster progress.
- Teaching does not do enough to challenge the most able, including the most able disadvantaged pupils. Teachers do not pay enough attention to the types of questions, activities or homework for this group of pupils. Consequently, the most able pupils do not make enough progress and teaching is failing to meet their needs.
- However, some teaching is stronger. Some teachers use questioning to good effect, are not satisfied with a pupil's first reply, and persevere with additional questioning to check pupils' understanding.
- Where teaching is stronger, teachers use assessment information effectively to challenge pupils. Pupils confirm that the quality of teaching is not consistently challenging and that the way teachers go about explaining things could be much better in some subjects.
- The impact of additional adults is mixed. Too often, the role of additional adults in the classroom, or the additional value they bring to accelerating pupils' progress, is unclear. There are times when additional adults hinder the progress pupils are making by stifling their independence. However, elsewhere in the school additional adults provide a valuable contribution to challenging and supporting pupils to achieve well.

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 feel safe and secure in school. They say that there is someone there they can talk to if they have any concerns or worries. The pastoral support is a strength of the school and parents and pupils alike praise the staff for the efforts to which they go to make sure that pupils, including pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and children looked after, feel safe and cared for in school.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are good. The extra-curricular activities are a real strength of the school. Pupils enjoy and participate in a wide range of sporting events that are on offer.
- Careers information, advice and guidance are helping the vast majority of pupils and students to continue in education, employment or training. As a result, the number of

pupils who are not in employment, education or training is below the national average. Leaders acknowledge that further work is needed to support those students who wish to follow apprenticeship routes rather than go to university.

- The school works well with a range of other agencies and professionals to ensure that pupils feel safe. For example, leaders make sure that they stay in regular contact with alternative providers to check that their pupils are attending and achieving. As a result, leaders are quick to identify when pupils at this provision are absent or not achieving well enough.
- Pupils acknowledge that bullying does occur, including social media bullying, but staff are usually quick to tackle this when it is brought to their attention. Racist and homophobic bullying is rare.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are not consistently good. Overall, pupils conduct themselves well in and around school. However, there are times when some pupils' silliness and disruption can affect the flow of learning. Sometimes learning slows when pupils talk across the classroom while the teacher is talking. Some pupils do not listen carefully enough because they are fiddling with their pens or looking at their mobile phones.
- Attendance levels are not good enough. Although attendance is improving, it remains below the national average. This is affecting the progress of particular groups of pupils, including boys, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Fixed-term exclusions are reducing but remain above the national average. Pupils' punctuality is improving but is not good enough in Years 8 and 9.
- Inspectors agree with pupils, parents and staff who commented that there needed to be better supervision at the change of lessons. Corridors can get very busy and there are times when pupils are pushed and shoved.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Despite leaders' claims that poor progress in 2016 was 'unique', it was not. The progress pupils make over time in a wide range of subjects, including English, mathematics, history, geography, Spanish, physical education (GCSE PE) and design technology (food and resistant materials) has been weak.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, has been low for a number of years. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have also made inadequate progress compared with pupils with similar starting points nationally. The progress of boys has been poor for some time, as has the progress of middle-ability pupils and high-attaining pupils.
- Leaders have put too much emphasis on attainment measures and this has led them to believe that pupils are doing much better than they actually are. Despite well above

average attainment in the English Baccalaureate in particular, pupils' progress from their starting points has been poor.

- Current in-school information and evidence gathered by inspectors show that there is little sign of improvement. At key stage 3, boys' progress in English still lags behind that of girls, and underachievement is predominantly found in the progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. There is a similar picture across the rest of key stage 3 in mathematics, science, history and geography.
- At key stage 4, the current picture of progress is equally poor. Current in-school information shows that the progress of Years 9, 10 and 11 is inadequate and has remained so at each check point throughout this academic year. The progress of key stage 4 pupils in mathematics and English is weak, especially for disadvantaged pupils, including the middle-attaining and most able. Leaders have made poor use of additional funding in helping disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities accelerate their progress.
- The progress pupils are currently making across a wide range of subjects is also inadequate. Significant numbers of pupils are underachieving in history, business studies, computer studies, food technology, resistant materials and GCSE PE.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision are making variable progress. Some pupils have made good progress and are returning to school to prepare for their examinations. Other pupils have made less progress, and regular reviews help check on the progress being made by the most vulnerable pupils.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Outcomes in the sixth form require improvement. Since the previous inspection, students have improved their rates of progress. The progress students make on academic courses is now broadly average. The most able and disadvantaged students have not made good enough progress over time.
- Current in-school information indicates that the progress students make on academic courses will remain broadly average this year and that the most able still need to improve their rates of progress. Sixth-form leaders have rightly identified that this remains a key area for development.
- Inspectors agree with students and sixth-form leaders that more needs to be done to further improve careers advice and guidance, especially for those students wishing to follow apprenticeship and employment routes. Advice and guidance are stronger for those students wishing to go to university, and the school is successful in helping some students gain places in the most prestigious universities.
- Leaders of the sixth form clearly demonstrate that they have the capacity to improve provision. They have a clear vision for the sixth form, and are passionate and committed in wanting to see all students secure good outcomes.
- Leaders have a forensic grasp of how well students are achieving. Leaders analyse how well different groups of students are doing and are more focused on student progress

than leaders elsewhere in the school.

- Sixth-form leaders know their priorities well. They have rightly identified the need to improve the achievement of girls and ensure that students do equally well across a wide range of different subjects.
- Elsewhere, leaders and managers have been more successful in improving the progress of students following vocational pathways and ensuring that those who need to improve their GCSE English and/or mathematics examinations are more successful second time around.
- In lessons, students demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and are focused and engaged. Teachers use skilful questioning at times to prompt and probe students and deepen their understanding of the issue being discussed.
- Students regularly attend school and retention rates are high. Students are full of praise for the way their teachers treat and teach them and would recommend the sixth form to other students. Students benefit from the care and guidance they receive. As a result, students feel safe and well supported.
- Students also benefit from the wide range of enrichment activities on offer. These include drama and film clubs, helping younger pupils in the school and participating in a wide range of sporting events.
- The school meets the 16 to 19 study programme requirements. Students are developing their understanding of the world of work well. The study programmes are varied and well suited to their needs and interests. All students benefit from participating in work experience.

School details

Unique reference number	106954
Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	10001040

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	Maintained comprehensive
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,819
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	350
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Irene Hartley MBE
Headteacher	Jon Taylor
Telephone number	01709 760222
Website	www.wcs.rotherham.sch.uk/
Email address	enquiries@wcs.rotherham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 October 2011

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website. There is a lack of evaluation of how additional funding is used to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who are looked after.
- The former deputy headteacher was appointed headteacher in September 2016.
- The school is significantly larger than other secondary schools.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is

slightly below the national average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is similar to that found nationally.

- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The majority of pupils are White British.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A number of pupils attend education and/or training at places away from the school. The providers are Dearne Valley College, Barnsley College, Leslie Frances Training, Serenity Training, Barnsley Digital Media Centre, Rowan Centre and Rotherham Aspire.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a wide range of evidence during inspection, including observations of teaching and learning walks, some of which were undertaken with senior leaders.
- Inspectors carefully scrutinised pupils' work over time in English, mathematics, science, history, geography, modern foreign languages and design technology.
- Inspectors held meetings with school staff, including the headteacher, other senior leaders and staff in charge of aspects of the school's work. Inspectors met with a group of middle leaders and newly and recently qualified teachers. They also met with a group of governors and a local authority officer.
- Telephone discussions were held with the acting virtual headteacher for children looked after, and staff in Dearne Valley College and Rotherham Aspire.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils and students during formal interviews, during lessons and informally.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation related to the school's work, gaining the school's views of its performance and information concerning pupils' attainment, progress, attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors scrutinised records concerning safeguarding, pupils' behaviour over time and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Inspectors analysed 167 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire and 48 free-text responses from parents. Inspectors also analysed 63 written responses from staff and 59 pupil responses.

Inspection team

Phil Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Catherine Garrett	Ofsted Inspector
Gordon Watts	Ofsted Inspector
Robert Pritchard	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Crossley	Ofsted Inspector
John McNally	Ofsted Inspector
Andy Swallow	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Butcher	Her Majesty's Inspector

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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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