

South Shields School

Nevinson Avenue, South Shields, Tyne and Wear NE34 8BT

Inspection dates

8–9 May 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Although the quality of teaching is improving, there is still variability between subjects. Innovations in planning and assessment are not implemented to consistent effect in some subjects.
- While leaders and teachers have secured improvements in pupils' progress, this remains below average in some subjects and for some groups of pupils, particularly middle ability pupils.
- Although there is evidence that the progress of disadvantaged pupils is improving, this still lags behind that of other pupils.
- Strategies to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the curriculum are less developed at key stage 3 than at key stage 4.
- Rates of absence and fixed-term exclusion from school are too high for pupils, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and senior leaders have led the school with commitment and moral purpose at a time of exceptional challenge. They have retained a consistent focus on achieving the very best for the pupils in their care.
- Leaders and teachers have secured considerable improvements in pupils' progress and attainment, particularly at key stage 4. Pupils' outcomes are improving across a wide range of subjects. They benefit from a broad and well-planned curriculum at key stage 4.
- Leaders and teachers are working effectively to improve the quality of teaching. Although inconsistencies remain, stronger training and planning have contributed to improving outcomes.
- Leaders and teachers provide extensive care and support for pupils' welfare. They are attentive to the needs of all pupils, particularly the most vulnerable pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly at key stage 3, so that enhanced planning and assessment are implemented to consistently good effect across all subjects.
- Further accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - embedding higher expectations and new teaching routines, particularly for pupils in the middle ability range
 - further addressing gaps in the knowledge and understanding of disadvantaged pupils.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - reducing the reasons for, and hence the instances of, fixed-term exclusion of pupils from school
 - improving pupils' attendance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has provided strong and stable leadership through a period of exceptional change. She has built a strong and committed leadership team that has retained a continual focus on improving pupils' outcomes and the care they receive.
- Senior leaders have worked with subject leaders to enhance leadership at all levels. Senior and middle leaders have undertaken accredited training programmes to develop their leadership skills. Middle leaders are working increasingly well to lead change, check standards and improve the quality of teaching.
- Leaders' actions are securing improvements in pupils' outcomes. All pupils secured improvements in their attainment and progress at the end of key stage 4 in 2018. This momentum for improvement is being sustained across an increasing range of subjects.
- Leaders have a clear vision for improving teaching. They are using training and research to provide increasingly effective professional development. Teachers value the professional development they receive and the increasing opportunities to share good practice with their colleagues. This has led to improvements in the quality of teaching, although they are not implemented to consistently good effect across all subjects.
- Leaders have developed stronger systems to check pupils' progress. Teachers use information on pupils' prior attainment more effectively to modify teaching and arrange additional support to address emerging gaps in pupils' progress.
- Senior and middle leaders regularly check the quality of teaching. They work effectively with their school improvement adviser to seek additional quality assurance. This provides them with an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Teachers have worked with local schools and examination boards to develop much more accurate standards of assessment.
- Leaders are extremely responsive to the emotional well-being of pupils and staff. Leaders have commissioned counselling to help pupils, staff, parents and carers through this period of change. The local authority has provided additional resources to support these processes. School leaders have achieved remarkable stability and calm in a climate of exceptional challenge.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and her team have reviewed and improved support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). She has made sure teachers are more aware of the needs of these pupils and has introduced more tailored support programmes. Relationships with parents have also been strengthened to discuss the effectiveness of support. As a result of these actions, pupils with SEND are making better progress and attending more regularly, although they remain at greater risk of exclusion.
- Performance management arrangements are effective. The process has supported improvements in teaching and pupils' progress since the previous inspection.
- Leaders carried out a thorough review of their use of pupil premium funding after the previous inspection. They have raised staff awareness of the barriers faced by some disadvantaged pupils and the effects of these on their progress. Leaders now monitor

the progress of disadvantaged pupils more assiduously. They modify teaching and support to more effectively address the barriers that some disadvantaged pupils face. These actions are helping pupils to make better progress, although this remains weaker than that of their peers in school.

- The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Leaders encourage a culture where pupils show respect for equality at many levels. Pupils have a good awareness of democracy and the dangers posed by forms of extremism. Some aspects of the school's work to develop pupils' understanding of different faiths are less well developed.
- Leaders provide pupils with effective and impartial careers education and guidance. This is helping increasing proportions of pupils to progress to education, employment and training to a wide variety of providers.

Governance of the school

- Governors share the moral purpose of senior leaders in sustaining improvement and stability through a period of challenge. They remain committed to the school and the wider community. They are determined that the improvements secured in 2018 will be built upon.
- Governors have a strong understanding of the school's performance. Senior leaders provide governors with meaningful and increasingly accurate information on pupils' progress. Governors work well with the school improvement adviser commissioned by the local authority to gain additional views of the school's performance.
- Governors have an effective balance of expertise and community awareness. They know their areas of responsibility and visit the school to talk to leaders and pupils about specific aspects of the school's work.
- Governors are aware of the use of additional funding to support the needs of pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. They can see how this contributed to improving progress in 2018 and is continuing to do so for current pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have developed a culture of safeguarding. They have developed a dedicated safeguarding team that works closely with staff to maintain a watchful eye on pupils' welfare. Through training and regular briefings, teachers are kept up to date with safeguarding issues and concerns.
- Leaders pursue any concerns over pupils' welfare swiftly and follow these through to ensure that pupils are safe. They have developed effective links with external agencies to check pupils' safety. Leaders document any concerns in a detailed and timely manner. Their actions have a very positive effect upon pupils' safety and well-being.
- Leaders carry out thorough checks to ensure the suitability of adults working on site. Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of safeguarding policies and practices and the actions to take to address any concerns over pupils' welfare.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Leaders have taken purposeful action to improve the quality of teaching. These improvements contributed to much better outcomes for pupils in 2018. However, these improvements are not consistently embedded to enable pupils to make strong progress across a wide range of subjects.
- On occasions, teaching does not enable middle ability pupils to make strong progress. Work is not consistently pitched at a level that helps them to acquire knowledge and skills in enough depth.
- Leaders have introduced new approaches to teachers' planning that have improved the quality of teaching. Teachers are now more mindful of pupils' prior ability and use this more deftly in their planning. These practices are more developed at key stage 4 than at key stage 3.
- Leaders and teachers have strengthened their assessment practice to enable pupils to improve the quality of their work. Where this practice is used effectively, in line with the school policy, incisive comments encourage pupils to engage with their feedback and make telling improvements to their work. In other cases, more often in key stage 3, these practices are less developed and do not support deeper engagement or address misconceptions clearly enough.
- In many subjects, the teachers' collective planning is improving the quality of the curriculum. Teachers are pooling their subject expertise to sequence subject content in ever more considered ways. There is evidence of the effective use of models and prompts to help pupils to remember subject knowledge and the techniques they need to achieve success in examinations. These approaches contributed to the stronger outcomes of 2018.
- Teaching in mathematics is particularly effective. Teachers demonstrate strong subject expertise and implement effective routines. Such practice is becoming stronger in other subjects. Improving planning is supporting better teaching in English, history and geography, although variance remains, particularly at key stage 3.
- Teachers are providing more effective challenge and support for the most able pupils. They are providing increasing opportunities for pupils to work at greater depths of understanding. As a result, these pupils made much stronger progress in 2018 and there is evidence that they continue to do so.
- In the majority of lessons, pupils display positive attitudes to learning. They listen attentively and show a willingness to respond to teachers' questioning. On occasions, these attitudes are less developed at key stage 3, where pupils have been most affected by the loss of their friends and peers ahead of the planned school closure.
- Although leaders have sustained improvements to teaching in extremely challenging circumstances, staff changes in some subjects has affected the consistency of teaching, particularly at key stage 3. This has made it more difficult for changes to planning and assessment to be implemented effectively.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Leaders and teachers have worked to improve pupils' oral skills and self-assurance. While this has had success at key stage 4, some pupils, particularly at key stage 3, remain less confident as learners.
- Leaders and teachers make pupils aware of the threats they may face from exploitation and of the threats they may face online. In some cases, this work has had a very positive effect upon pupils' capacity to keep themselves safe.
- Leaders and teachers are committed to ensuring pupils' emotional well-being. In the wake of the planned school closure, some pupils have experienced anxiety as their friends and proportions of their peer group left the school. School leaders have commissioned additional counselling services and check the effect of this support on pupils' well-being.
- In many areas, teachers develop positive attitudes to learning where pupils are willing to share their views and respond to questions. Where teaching is less consistent and affected by staffing changes, pupils' learning behaviours are less developed, sometimes resulting in off-task behaviour.
- In discussion, pupils said that staff took incidents of bullying seriously and they were confident that leaders would work to address such incidents.
- Risk assessments and visits are in place to check the welfare and attendance of pupils recently placed in alternative education provision. There is evidence that some of these pupils are developing their self-confidence through these placements, although their wider academic progress is weaker.
- The curriculum enriches pupils' social and moral development, although work to enhance their understanding of different faiths is less developed.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Although the majority of pupils behave well, the last two terms has seen a rise in behaviour incidents and the use of fixed-term exclusion of pupils from school. There is evidence that new initiatives are beginning to improve aspects of behaviour but figures for fixed-term exclusions remain too high.
- Pupils at key stage 4 have developed purposeful attitudes to learning over time. Pupils at key stage 3 expressed a more mixed view of standards of behaviour in lessons, although inspectors saw little evidence of this in classrooms or around the school site.
- Senior leaders are working with pupils to manage behaviour. They have set up particular initiatives to support the behaviour of pupils with SEND to reduce the risks of exclusion.
- Leaders have worked intensively with pupils and parents to improve attendance. This task has become more challenging with the changes the school is experiencing. For example, pupils with previously good attendance have shown a drastic reduction in

attendance prior to their departure, significantly depressing overall attendance figures. Leaders have done much to keep attendance levels broadly in line with those of 2018, although absence remains too high.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Leaders and teachers secured marked improvements in pupils' progress and attainment across all outcome measures at the end of key stage 4 in 2018. The proportion of pupils achieving grades 5 and above in English and mathematics doubled, while the proportion achieving grades 4 and above increased by 20 percentage points.
- In 2018, rising standards of attainment were accompanied by increases in pupils' progress. Overall progress improved by an average of a third of a grade, with English improving by half a grade and science by a full grade. While these figures remain below average, they represent consistent and secure improvement.
- A thorough review of pupils' books and folders by the inspection team shows that current pupils are continuing to make better progress. Leaders and teachers are ensuring that pupils in Years 10 and 11 are benefiting from the stronger teaching and heightened expectations that have underpinned this improvement journey.
- Teachers are improving the progress of the most able pupils and enriching the curriculum with higher challenge. This helped the most able pupils to achieve improvements that were equivalent to a full grade's progress at the end of key stage 4. Increasing proportions obtained higher grades at GCSE. The richer curriculum and more probing questions that supported these improvements are evident in current practice.
- The increasing progress of the most able pupils is not matched by their middle ability peers. Work and the learning provided do not consistently meet the needs of these pupils. Leaders and governors are aware of this and are introducing new strategies to accelerate the progress of these pupils.
- Over time, disadvantaged pupils have made weaker progress than their peers. Leaders have worked with teachers and subject leaders to raise awareness of the barriers these pupils face and how to address them more closely. This resulted in marked improvement of disadvantaged pupils' attainment in all subject areas in 2018. Disadvantaged pupils also made better progress, although their rates of improvement were lower than those of their peers. A review of pupils' workbooks by inspectors showed that improvements are continuing, although differences remain as teaching does not consistently address gaps in their knowledge.
- Leaders provide more tailored support for pupils with SEND, who made better progress in 2018. This trajectory of improvement is continuing for pupils currently at the school.
- There is evidence that the small number of pupils who recently started alternative education placements are growing in confidence and becoming more socially engaged as a result of their placements. There is less evidence that these placements are supporting the academic progress of these pupils.
- The proportion of Year 11 pupils entering education, employment and training has increased significantly in recent years as a result of raised expectations and improved guidance. It is now in line with that seen nationally.

School details

Unique reference number	131756
Local authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	10087579

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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	354
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gillian Moore
Headteacher	Allie Denholm
Telephone number	0191 456 8929
Website	www.southshieldsschool.co.uk/
Email address	info@southshieldsschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 October 2017

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The school has experienced a substantial reduction in pupil numbers since the local authority confirmed in January 2019 its decision to close the school.
- The school is scheduled to close at the end of August in 2020. From September 2019, the school will cater for pupils in Years 8, 9 and 11.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is well above average.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative education provision at New Leaf and G and M Training.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in a wide range of lessons and classes. Senior leaders joined inspectors for a number of these observations.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and a wider group of staff. They also met with leaders responsible for pupils' safety and welfare.
- Inspectors met with six members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. One governor joined the meeting by telephone.
- The inspectors met the school improvement adviser and a senior representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors met groups of pupils in key stages 3 and 4 and talked to pupils about their learning and experiences at the school in lessons and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes and in the transitions between lessons.
- The inspectors carried out an extensive review of work in pupils' books and folders.
- Inspectors looked at the school's professional development programme, self-evaluation of its effectiveness and a range of documents outlining the school's progress in dealing with improvement priorities. They also considered arrangements for safeguarding and records relating to attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors took into account the 14 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and the 10 free-text responses from parents. They also considered the 30 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 26 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Malcolm Kirtley, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Geoffrey Lumsdon	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Cook	Ofsted 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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