

# Netherhall School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112382
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	337916
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 June 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Vincent Ashworth HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	890
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	107
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Keith Little
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr David Sibbit
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 March 2007
<b>School address</b>	Netherhall Road Maryport Cumbria CA15 6NT
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 40 lessons which represent the observation of some 70% of available teaching staff. Inspectors were unable to observe teaching in Year 11 and in the sixth form. Inspectors held meetings with the Chair of Governors, senior school staff, middle leaders, teachers, support staff, representatives from the local authority and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at samples of students' marked work across a wide range of subjects and different year groups. Inspectors looked in detail at documents relating to the school's monitoring of its performance and undertook a detailed analysis of students' attainment and progress. They also scrutinised minutes of meetings, improvement plans and safeguarding procedures. The responses from parents and carers on 167 questionnaires were considered, together with replies from staff and students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress made by students, especially those of average and lower ability, to determine the impact of intervention and strategies to raise achievement
- the strategies used to improve students' literacy skills and their impact on students' attainment in English
- how effectively teachers plan and use strategies in their lessons to meet students' individual needs and ensure that they all make progress
- how well leaders and managers at all levels use information about performance to devise, implement, monitor and adjust plans and policies in order to improve and sustain outcomes for students.

## Information about the school

Netherhall School is a smaller than average school. Almost all students are from White British backgrounds. There are 17 looked after children attending the school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average, as is the proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The number of students with a statement of special educational needs is similar to that found nationally. The school has been a specialist sports college since 2003 and has achieved the Sportsmark Silver and Healthy Schools awards. A range of extended services are made available to the local community. The school receives support from the National Challenge initiative.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

Netherhall School provides a satisfactory and rapidly improving quality of education. The school values its students enormously. The headteacher and senior managers recognise the challenges faced by many students and are determined to ensure that there are opportunities for all to succeed. This is particularly the case for some of the young people whose circumstances make them more vulnerable than others; their well-being and progression are paramount to staff. Overall, support for students' well-being and the quality of pastoral care is outstanding. Support for students whose circumstances have made them vulnerable, those with complex needs and their families and carers is exemplary.

The school has taken decisive steps to raise standards following disappointing results in 2009. Inspection evidence and reliable data from the school show that action taken in the current year has had a significant impact on raising students' achievement and attainment, especially for students currently in Years 10 and 11. Strategies to raise students' performance in English have been particularly successful. Compared with last year, many more students are currently making at least satisfactory and sometimes good progress from their below average starting points. There remains wide variation in the quality of students' learning and progress in lessons. Too many students remain passive in lessons because activities are not particularly well matched to their individual needs or fail to capture their interest. Students come to the school with relatively low levels of literacy which has an impact on their ability to make steady progress. The school has taken steps to address weaknesses in writing skills, but students' communication skills remain a weakness. There are pockets of excellent teaching, for example in religious education, art, performing arts and Learn2Learn. Other subjects, however, do not systematically draw on the examples of good practice that exist in the school.

The school's self-evaluation is sufficiently self-critical, probing and incisive. Senior managers are acutely aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The capacity of middle leaders to drive improvements has increased considerably since the last inspection. The challenging targets that have been set for the whole school are testimony to the school's determination to encourage students to aspire and achieve. For example, students in Year 10 have already surpassed the school's ambitious target for the proportion who should achieve five or more good GCSE grades including English and mathematics. Determined not to rest on their laurels, senior managers have revised the target to provide more challenge and motivation both for staff and students. Although there remains some variation between subjects, the majority of middle leaders have been equipped with the knowledge and skills to identify and tackle

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underachievement in a more timely fashion. Management decisions at all levels are underpinned by detailed assessment information which is accurate and presented in a clear and accessible format.

The headteacher has been shrewd in making particularly good use of external support to target the weakest aspects of the school. This has had a significant impact on accelerating the rate of improvement in the current academic year. The school has yet to demonstrate that the improvements can be sustained over time. The school's capacity to improve is therefore satisfactory.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to raise students' attainment, the school should increase the effectiveness of teaching by:
  - making more effective use of information about students' prior attainment to inform lesson planning so that activities are tailored to students' individual needs
  - ensuring that all teachers systematically check on the extent of students' learning and progress in lessons
  - increasing opportunities in all lessons for students to develop their speaking and listening skills
  - providing more opportunities in lessons for students to take responsibility for their own learning and demonstrate their creativity
  - ensuring that the best practice in inspirational and innovative teaching is shared more widely.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students say they learn the most when lessons are fun and they can roll their sleeves up and get actively involved. A good example of this was seen in a Year 7 science lesson where students enjoyed working together to investigate and experiment with model wind turbines to find how to maximise electricity output.

The activities served to consolidate and deepen students' learning and resulted in high levels of enjoyment and a strong sense of achievement. Students also say that the quality of their learning varies from lesson to lesson. This is because teachers sometimes speak too much in lessons and fail to provide opportunities for students to investigate, enquire and develop as independent learners. Weaknesses in students' literacy skills also have an impact on their enjoyment of learning. Attention is given to developing students' writing skills in some lessons, but this is insufficiently well embedded across all subjects. There is insufficient attention given to developing

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students' speaking and listening skills; as a consequence, students' communication skills are weak. This has an impact on their level of enthusiasm, motivation and willingness to participate in lessons.

Overall, students make satisfactory progress. The school has been successful in ensuring that disaffected boys make at least satisfactory progress. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to other groups of students. Standards have improved since the last inspection but remain well below the national average. Although 51% of students gained five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE in 2009, only 35% gained this with English and mathematics. This was largely because too many capable students failed to break through the grade D borderline, particularly in English. The school's data indicate that strategies to raise standards for middle and lower ability students have been successful in the current year. The number of students achieving five A\* to G grades has improved considerably and very few students, including those following an alternative curriculum, leave the school without a qualification.

A minority of students, and parents and carers, raised concerns about behaviour, but the inspection team found that the behaviour of the vast majority of students was good, both in lessons and around the school. In lessons where there is insufficient challenge a small minority of students misbehave. Incidents of bullying are rare. The school recognises the need to support students in identifying ways in which they can contribute more positively to their own learning. Therefore, behaviour is satisfactory overall. Students understand the benefits of leading a healthy lifestyle and take part in the wide range of physical activities available. Many make healthy choices at lunchtimes and take full advantage of their free access to the school's impressive sports centre. Students' good levels of involvement in activities linked to the specialism and fundraising events demonstrate their willingness to take on responsibility and make a difference to the school and wider community. Students develop a good range of vocational skills and personal qualities through the vocational curriculum, enrichment opportunities and work-related learning. However, their basic skills in literacy and numeracy are less well developed. Students' good understanding of diversity and difference is enriched through visits, assemblies and the taught curriculum.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Although the majority of the teaching observed during the inspection was good or better, there remains some inadequate teaching. Examples of creative and inspirational teaching were observed in performing arts, English, history and art. The common ingredient in these lessons was the teacher's passion for the subject and ability to take risks and to capture students' imaginations. Where teaching is most effective, good planning provides challenge which is matched well to students' needs so that they make good progress. In less effective lessons teachers' expectations are too low and tasks fail to provide challenge and to stretch students. In such instances students become passive learners and their progress falters. This is because teachers' planning and learning objectives lack the precision to enable them to measure and evaluate students' progress during the course of the lesson. Similarly, tasks are not tailored to different levels of ability in the class and often fail to ignite students' desire to enquire and deepen their understanding. Detailed marking and helpful feedback was seen in English, religious education, history, geography and art. However, in a few subjects marking is infrequent and does not help students to understand how well they have done and what they need to do to improve.

The school continually reviews and amends its curriculum to ensure that it meets the changing needs of each year group. The options and vocational courses available in Years 10 and 11 are well suited to students' individual needs, interests and aspirations. The needs of students who would not be well served by a traditional curriculum are particularly well met, which has helped to improve attendance and behaviour. Strong collaboration between local primary schools and other local providers of post-16

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education and training ensures students' smooth transition into the different phases of their education. Opportunities for work-related learning are good and sixth form students' achievements through Young Enterprise are highly commendable. Almost all students leave school and progress onto further education, training or employment. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which are popular and well attended.

The outstanding care, guidance and support provided to students reflect the school's strongly inclusive ethos. Systems and procedures to encourage students to attend regularly are extremely well managed. As a consequence, overall attendance rates are above average and instances of persistent absenteeism are consistently low. Attendance rates for students who are looked after are high. Support for students whose behaviour is challenging has also been highly effective; exclusion and repeat exclusion rates are low. The way the school works with other agencies to support students with complex needs and those at risk of disaffection is exemplary. As a consequence, students feel safe, valued, cared for and optimistic about their future. The school's tracking system is helping to raise standards through identifying students who may not reach their targets and to provide programmes of well-targeted support for them.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b> Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	<b>3</b>
	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The good leadership of the senior leadership team has ensured that staff feel part of the improvements that are taking place and morale is high. Analysis of questionnaires returned by staff during the inspection shows the overwhelming majority feel proud to be part of the school, are clear about the school's priorities and feel valued.

Development plans are detailed and focused on improving attainment and meeting the needs of all students. The proportion of good and better teaching has increased since the last inspection. Systems and procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are robust. Senior leaders have an accurate view of teaching and learning in the school. Too little action has been taken to move satisfactory teaching to good and to reduce inconsistencies within and between subjects. Recognised good practice in teaching, learning and assessment by some teachers is not yet shared more widely with others. Middle leadership has been strengthened. Department heads are accountable for their students' progress; they undertake their work with enthusiasm and conviction. Due to improvements in the management of the school's data, managers at all levels are



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much better placed to pinpoint and support students who underachieve.

Governors are committed to the school's continuous improvement; they are beginning to hold the school to account for its performance. Equality of opportunity is given a high priority in all aspects of school life. The attainment gap between boys and girls has been narrowed. The school is effective in fulfilling its statutory duties and has good procedures for safeguarding students. The specialist sports college initiatives are particularly effective in promoting collaboration and partnership. The students who take on the role of sports leader in local primary schools are a good example of this. The school monitors closely and evaluates the extent of its contribution to its own and other communities. Senior managers cope well with the significant challenges of the site, poor accommodation and a lack of information and communication technology resources in some areas.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

**Sixth form**

This is a satisfactory and rapidly improving sixth form. Students' needs and capabilities are well matched to the range of courses and subjects on offer. By the end of Year 13 students make satisfactory progress relative to their prior attainment. Pass rates in A-level examinations are broadly average while overall standards are below average. Students make better than expected progress in religious education and performing arts; results show underachievement in mathematics, psychology and business. Students' progress in Year 12 has been relatively slow because they have been ill-prepared for the leap between GCSE and AS-level study. Action has been taken to

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address this and the school's data show a significant increase in standards for the current Year 12.

Students also say that procedures to track their individual progress are much improved. They are very clear about their individual targets and the steps they need to take to improve their grade. Students are highly motivated and enjoy their studies. They value the quiet study area as a place where they can develop their independent learning. Retention rates are high because students feel nurtured and valued by their head of sixth form. Progression rates to higher education are consistently high. All students who apply to university are successful in gaining a place at their first or second choice. Students develop as mature, confident and articulate adults. They make a significant contribution to the school community and add value to younger students' learning. Leadership of the sixth form is focused on actions that will have the most significant impact on improved outcomes for students.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

**Views of parents and carers**

The analysis of the responses from the questionnaires returned by parents and carers indicates that the very large majority are happy with their children's experience at school. They feel well informed about their children's progress. Most are confident that their children are kept safe and that their needs are well met. A very small minority would like the school to deal more effectively with unacceptable behaviour, take more account of their suggestions and concerns and advise them on ways in which they can support their children's learning.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Netherhall School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 167 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 890 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	20	115	69	9	5	3	2
The school keeps my child safe	44	26	110	66	10	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	72	43	86	51	4	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	60	36	98	59	6	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	39	23	110	66	5	3	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	19	106	63	24	14	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	17	115	69	16	10	3	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	40	24	112	67	6	4	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	26	106	63	8	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	41	25	95	57	16	10	9	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	20	107	64	18	11	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	39	23	109	65	9	5	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	37	90	54	6	4	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



23 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Netherhall School, Maryport, CA15 6NT

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for taking the time to show us your work and talk to us during the recent inspection. Our key purpose in visiting your school was to establish what is working well and what could be improved. We judged your school to be satisfactory overall; we also found some aspects of your school to be good. For example, we saw how your levels or grades in English have improved compared with previous years. Similarly, we also identified that students in Year 12 are making better progress because the school is helping you to cope with the big step between GCSE and the demands of advanced level study. The thing that impressed us the most was the significant effort that so many of you have made to improve your attendance. Well done. As so many of you choose to attend school regularly, standards are improving quickly. What makes your school special is the outstanding care, guidance and support provided by the teachers and other adults who work with you. They have your best interests at heart and are determined to make sure you get a good start in life.

Your headteacher worked with us to identify ways in which your school could continue to raise standards. We decided that the school should:

- help you to get more involved in lessons so you can really enjoy your learning
- make sure that teachers plan lessons that include activities that suit your different needs and then check that you are making good progress in your learning
- help you to develop your communication skills during lessons
- find ways for your teachers to learn from each other so that all your lessons can be as good as the very best.

You have a very important part to play in this. You can continue to attend regularly, try your best and strive to be active learners in all lessons. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Vincent Ashworth

Her Majesty's Inspector

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