

Spennymoor Comprehensive School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114300
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	338333
Inspection dates	24–25 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Ann Wallis

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	762
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	111
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs A.M. Armstrong
Headteacher	Mr Paul Gillis
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Whitworth Lane Spennymoor County Durham DL16 7LN
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 30 lessons and saw 30 teachers teach. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and groups of students and spoke with a representative of the local authority and the School Improvement Partner. They observed the school's work, and looked at students' books, student progress data, and other documentation. They analysed 152 questionnaires from parents and carers, 86 questionnaires from students and 34 questionnaires from staff.

- the attainment and progress of students, particularly in English
- whether care, guidance and support and students' personal development are strengths of the school
- how well best practice is shared to raise the standard of teaching and learning and assessment across the school
- the impact of school partnerships, particularly on the curriculum.

Information about the school

This is a below average sized school which serves the town of Spennymoor and surrounding villages. The proportion of students known to be eligible for a free school meal is above average. Most students are of White British heritage and few are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. An above average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has held specialist status for technology since 1999. It is part of a hard federation and is in a trust, with a joint governing body, with a neighbouring school. Both schools are due to close in September 2013 and reopen as one school. A new school building is planned to open in September 2014.

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

2

Main findings

Spennymoor School is a satisfactory and improving school with many strengths. These include:

- students who behave well, are keen to contribute to their community and know how to stay safe and healthy
- the strong partnerships the school has established, which support the curriculum well
- the good quality care, guidance and support it provides which is appreciated by both parents and students
- governors, leaders and managers who are forward-looking and planning carefully for the school's forthcoming merger with its partner school.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection. Areas for improvement have been addressed successfully. Attainment is rising, and teaching and learning, and attendance and behaviour are improving. School self-evaluation is accurate and leaders and managers have a very clear vision for further improvement. The recently restructured senior leadership team is highly motivated and has clear lines of responsibility to ensure that subject departments are well supported. Consequently, the school has good capacity for further improvement.

Students make satisfactory progress from their starting points to reach average standards of attainment by the end of Year 11. This represents satisfactory achievement. They make particularly good progress in technology subjects reflecting the school's specialist status. Progress has been slower in English but this is now beginning to quicken, particularly at Key Stage 3. Senior leaders analyse examination and test data rigorously. However, assessment data are not yet used consistently in all departments to plan challenging learning which is closely matched to students' needs.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but many examples of good practice were also seen. The best lessons are fast paced, tasks are varied and interesting, and students enjoy learning. In lessons where the pace of learning is slower, teachers sometimes talk for too long and students have fewer opportunities to work independently and in pairs and groups. Good practice in teaching is now being shared but has not yet had sufficient impact to raise the quality of teaching to consistently good across the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and accelerate students' progress, particularly in English, by making consistent use of assessment information to plan challenging next steps in

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students' learning which are closely matched to their needs.

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that the pace of learning is quick enough in all lessons
 - reducing the amount of teacher talk and allowing students more time to learn independently
 - increasing the variety of activities in lessons and the opportunities for students to develop their speaking skills through paired and group work.
- 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

In lessons students make at least satisfactory and often good progress because most are keen to learn and work hard. Scrutiny of work in students' folders and books confirmed that their achievement is satisfactory and their attainment is average. GCSE results have been broadly average for the last three years, although attainment in English has been below that of other subjects. The school's detailed student progress data now confirm that students are on track to reach challenging targets, including those in English, this year. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making satisfactory progress because they receive constructive individual help from both teachers and teaching assistants.

Students attend school regularly, are usually punctual and behave well. They have satisfactory literacy and numeracy skills. Their information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developed well and they enjoy taking responsibility and contributing to the school community. Consequently, they have a sound preparation for the world of work and their role as future citizens.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2

¹ 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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Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory overall and in some lessons is good. Teachers have good relationships with students and classes are usually managed well. The pace of learning is quickest in lessons where there are varied activities and students have a range of opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills through paired and group work. In some lessons a few students become restless when teachers talk for too long and their pace of learning slows down. Work is marked regularly and in most subjects students are given good pointers for improving their work. However, the results of assessments are not always used to plan students' learning so that work is closely matched to their needs.

The curriculum is reviewed regularly to ensure that it meets students' needs well. It is well supported by the strong partnerships the school has forged with other schools, colleges and businesses through its federation and as a result of technology college status. These partnerships allow a greater breadth of courses to be offered to students in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Joint curriculum planning with the school's federation partner is ensuring that students' education is enhanced, rather than disrupted, when the two schools close and open as a new school in 2013.

Students and parents are appreciative of the good care, guidance and support the school provides. The school works closely with a range of specialist agencies to support all students but particularly those whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. Younger students are helped to settle quickly into Year 7 and older students say they are given good advice about how to choose option subjects, careers and further education courses.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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How effective are leadership and management?

The governors, headteacher and the newly restructured senior leadership team have a very clear vision for improving the school further. They are firmly focused on raising attainment, particularly in English and mathematics and sharing good practice to improve the quality of teaching. Middle leaders are well supported and the work of departments is evaluated with increasing rigour. Governors are fully involved in the strategic development of the school. Through the work of the joint governing body, they have been instrumental in forging partnerships with a neighbouring school with which the school is due to merge. Safeguarding meets requirements and staff have a sound understanding of child protection and risk assessment procedures. Equal opportunities are promoted well and, consequently, all groups of students make satisfactory progress. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. The school has good links with the local community and is developing links with communities further afield. It has yet to evaluate the impact of this work.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Sixth form

The overall effectiveness of this small but expanding sixth form is good. Students, who complete their A2 qualifications and those on vocational courses, reach average and sometimes above average standards and make good progress. Students value the good levels of guidance and support they receive, especially when they are applying for higher education courses. The small size and familiar nature of the sixth form are what

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attract many students to enter Year 12, although a higher number than average do not continue their studies into Year 13. Teaching is at least satisfactory and in some lessons it is good. The curriculum is broadened and enriched by the school's partnerships with other schools, colleges and businesses. Leaders and managers of the sixth form have a clear idea of how the sixth form should improve. They are proving effective in tackling areas of weakness and they engage well with students. This is helping students to make good progress and to achieve good outcomes overall during their time in the sixth form.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school and pleased with the education their children receive. Some commented on how well their children had settled into the school and how appreciative they were of the support and guidance their children received. Inspectors' findings endorsed these views. A small minority of parents and carers commented that the quality of teaching was inconsistent and that their children with special educational needs and/or disabilities did not receive sufficient support. Inspectors found the quality of teaching to be satisfactory overall with examples of good practice in some lessons and that all groups of students were supported well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Spennymoor Comprehensive 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 152 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 762 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	43	28	100	66	7	5	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	55	36	93	61	3	2	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	42	28	98	64	10	7	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	50	33	93	61	9	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	44	29	102	67	4	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	24	89	59	17	11	3	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	24	99	65	12	8	0	0
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)	64	42	74	49	7	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	45	30	90	59	12	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	43	28	95	63	7	5	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	22	96	63	14	9	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	48	32	94	62	4	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	57	38	89	59	3	2	1	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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). 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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



Dear Students

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school. We are particularly grateful to those of you who took time to talk with us about your school. We would also like to thank your parents and carers for letting us know their views by filling in our questionnaires.

These are the main findings in our report:

- You behave well, attend regularly and know how to stay safe and healthy.
- Yours is a satisfactory school where teaching and learning are satisfactory.
- You make satisfactory progress and reach average standards.
- The curriculum you follow, the way your school is led and managed and the quality of care, guidance and support you receive are all good.

This is what we have asked your school to do now:

Raise attainment and accelerate your progress, particularly in English, by using the results of your assessments to plan work for you which is more closely matched to your needs.

Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:

- ensuring that your pace of learning is quick enough in all lessons
- allowing you more time to learn independently
- increasing the variety of activities in lessons and the opportunities for you to develop your speaking skills through paired and group work.

You can help your school to become even better by working with your teachers to achieve the very best you can.

Yours sincerely

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