

John Spence Community High School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 108644 |
| Local authority | North Tyneside |
| Inspection number | 377793 |
| Inspection dates | 11–12 October 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Derek Neil |

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

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|--|---|
| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 820 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Martin Shortreed |
| Headteacher | Jim Stephenson |
| Date of previous school inspection | 16 November 2006 |
| School address | Preston Road North Shields NE29 9PU |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 31 lessons, taught by 29 staff. Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the School Improvement Partner, members of the governing body, members of staff, and groups of students. They observed various activities throughout the school day and looked at a range of documents including policies related to safeguarding and the school's development plans. Inspectors considered 426 parental questionnaires together with questionnaires completed by students and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effective is the school's action to improve the performance of its weaker departments?
- How good is the provision for and the progress made by the most-able students?
- How accurate is the school's assessment of teaching?
- To what extent is the school's strategic plan leading to improvements?

Information about the school

This specialist sports college is of average size. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is about average. The numbers of students from minority-ethnic groups and of those who speak English as an additional language are below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The school has won many awards, including achieving Healthy Schools status, Sportsmark Gold, Artsmark Gold and Basic Skills awards.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is an outstanding school. It has improved in several respects since its previous inspection. Parents and carers are very happy to send their children there knowing that the excellent provision will help them reach their potential. One typical comment in the parental questionnaires was, 'We are delighted that our child is doing exceedingly well, is happy and excited to attend, and is being moulded into a well-rounded member of the community.'

Students enter the school with attainment that is broadly average. They make outstanding progress to reach above-average standards by the end of Year 11 and in some subjects they reach high standards. Students do this because the excellent curriculum provides a wide range of courses with which the school builds individual programmes designed to maximise the value of each student's final qualifications. For example, the students make excellent progress in a wide range of BTEC courses. Those entered for separate sciences make outstanding progress to achieve very high grades at GCSE. This process is underpinned by very rigorous assessment systems that enable staff to match each student to the most appropriate course, and to recognise when students would benefit from a change of curriculum diet or from additional support, such as help from a mentor. The very high levels of care and support for students also contribute to their outstanding achievement. For example, the school has recently introduced new procedures to improve attendance, which is now above average after a decline following the previous inspection. Good teaching, too, ensures that students learn well in class and are well prepared for examinations, though in some lessons they do not get enough opportunity to develop skills in learning independently. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good and sometimes excellent progress.

Students' personal development is at least good and many aspects are outstanding. They learn a lot about how to stay healthy; this can be seen in the great numbers who are involved in the rich programme of sporting activities that the school provides. Students make a very significant contribution to the school and local communities, for example, by leading a weekly club for disabled young people from across the borough. The arrangements for safeguarding students are exceptional and consequently the students feel very safe in school.

The considerable progress made since the previous inspection is due to the vision and determination of the leadership team. The weaker subject departments

identified at that time have been transformed. Although occasionally some departments' examination results are disappointing, senior staff are quick to take action to strengthen the provision in those subjects. The school has made strenuous efforts to improve GCSE results in English; although students make good progress in this subject, their attainment is not as high as in mathematics and science. School leaders have a good knowledge of what the school does well and an accurate view of the qualities of its best teachers. It has a good track record of planning for improvement and good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards of attainment further by improving GCSE results in English to match those in science and mathematics.
- Develop students' skills in working independently.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

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|----------|
| 1 |
|----------|

Students make outstanding progress because they are entered for appropriate courses and get high levels of support to make sure the results reflect their potential. They have very good attitudes to learning and a strong determination to succeed. On the whole they find learning enjoyable. In class they concentrate well and complete the work they are given. In the very best lessons they are highly engaged by the content and make rapid progress. For example, in a physical education class students enthusiastically worked in small groups to devise a drill to practise dribbling. They then demonstrated their drill to other groups, who assessed it according to a set of criteria. In the course of the lesson students of all abilities made excellent progress in developing their understanding and skills. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well in their examinations. They make good progress in English and mathematics, particularly when they get specialised tuition in small groups outside lessons, and sometimes more rapid progress in some other subjects.

Students are very safe at school. They adopt safe practices in class and around the building. Many appreciate the warm welcome they receive when they first arrive. Those starting in Year 7, for example, benefit from the safe environment provided just for them in the rose garden and the support they get from specially trained mentors in Year 10. The students behave well and their conduct in the narrow overcrowded corridors is exemplary. Occasionally, a small number are too passive in lessons and do not work as hard or behave as well as their classmates. Students have an impressive understanding of and commitment to healthy lifestyles. They are very articulate about the healthy choices they make and they contribute very much to the health of others, for example, by acting as sports leaders in local primary schools. Their contribution to the school community is excellent. They play their part in the improvements to the curriculum, for example, by successfully arguing for more practical work in science. Their preparation for life beyond school is good. Their basic skills are developed well, though they gain too little experience of working independently. Almost all students progress to employment or further education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

| | |
|---|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 1 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils' attainment ¹ | 2 |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress | 1 |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 1 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |
| 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 good and some is outstanding. In the best lessons, teachers carefully make sure that work is well matched to the ability of each student and that all students in the class are actively involved throughout the lesson. Pertinent questions extend the students' thinking and enable the teacher to check on their understanding. In an art lesson, for instance, the teacher spoke with each student individually as they worked, challenging them and supporting them, so that they achieved a very high standard of work. Teachers have very good relationships with the class, manage behaviour very well, and often make the learning stimulating and enjoyable. In less effective lessons, the teacher, despite knowing the students' needs well, does not always match the work closely to these, so that for some the work is too difficult, for others too easy. In a small number of lessons, the teacher talks too much and does not give students enough opportunity to work independently on their own or in collaboration with others.

The excellent curriculum has many strengths; this is reflected in the number of awards the school has achieved. It boasts an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, which enjoy high-participation rates. It is regularly reviewed and responsive to student and parental comments; the recent restructure that enables students to follow three separate sciences alongside a modern language exemplifies that. It provides a host of memorable experiences, such as the inspirational opportunities to meet and work with a legendary Olympic gold medallist and a paralympian. Most importantly, it has a varied range of courses and a high degree of flexibility so that students can be given a programme that is tailored to their ability, needs and interests, and which gives them every opportunity to reach their potential in a number of qualifications.

The school's success is due in no small way to the high level of care and support the students receive. Those joining the school are helped to settle quickly. Students

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

coming from another country are grateful for the help they get in integrating and forming new friendships. When students are having problems, staff work closely with their families to make sure their learning is not unduly affected. One parent wrote about a child with health problems who has been, 'incredibly well supported' and who, 'loves coming to school'. The school makes exceptional use of links with other agencies to support those students who are vulnerable because of circumstances at home.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to raising attainment and improving students' well-being. Their determination is shared across the whole staff. Leaders tackled the recommendations in the previous inspection report vigorously and they have overseen a demonstrable improvement in the subject departments that were underperforming at that time. They showed the same determination recently when examination results were not as high as expected. Planning for improvement in departments is closely allied to the school's strategic plan but its impact is limited, as it does not focus enough on the intended outcomes. The governing body is very supportive and brings a good range of skills to assist with the management of the school.

The school is committed to promoting equality of opportunity. It has excellent data on the progress made by different groups of students but still has some way to go to close the achievement gap in the core subjects between the most and the least able. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated. The sports specialism is a driving force for much of the school's work, including its contribution to community cohesion. Most impressively, the participation of literally hundreds of young people every weekend in different sporting activities is testimony to its impact on the cohesion of the local community. The school gives the safeguarding of its students the highest priority. Its exemplary procedures are extremely robust and subject to regular and rigorous monitoring.

These are the grades for the 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 | 2 |
| 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 | 1 |

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 2 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 1 |

Views of parents and carers

An extremely high proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. The very large majority replied positively to all of the questions. Many wrote additional comments in praise of the school. Several expressed concerns, but, with one exception, no strong trend was evident. All concerns were investigated; some supported the team's findings in this report. The only trend in these concerns was a feeling that communications with the school could be improved, such as information about academic progress or the courses on offer. This matter was brought to the attention of the headteacher, who has plans to deal with it.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at John Spence Community High 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 426 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 820 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 130 | 31 | 267 | 63 | 18 | 4 | 5 | 1 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 156 | 37 | 251 | 59 | 13 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 131 | 31 | 229 | 54 | 42 | 10 | 3 | 1 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 137 | 32 | 243 | 57 | 22 | 5 | 3 | 1 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 143 | 34 | 249 | 58 | 11 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 105 | 25 | 253 | 59 | 44 | 10 | 5 | 1 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 128 | 30 | 257 | 60 | 25 | 6 | 2 | 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) | 137 | 32 | 240 | 56 | 16 | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 128 | 30 | 265 | 62 | 18 | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 151 | 35 | 213 | 50 | 30 | 7 | 10 | 2 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 98 | 23 | 252 | 59 | 37 | 9 | 5 | 1 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 139 | 33 | 251 | 59 | 13 | 3 | 3 | 1 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 167 | 39 | 228 | 54 | 15 | 4 | 5 | 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 all 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 | 43 | 47 | 10 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 6 | 46 | 42 | 6 |
| Secondary schools | 14 | 36 | 41 | 9 |
| Sixth forms | 15 | 42 | 41 | 3 |
| Special schools | 30 | 48 | 19 | 3 |
| Pupil referral units | 14 | 50 | 31 | 5 |
| All schools | 10 | 44 | 39 | 6 |

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

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|----------------------------|---|
| 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 pupils' 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.



13 October 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of John Spence Community High School, North Shields, NE29 9PU

Thank you for welcoming my colleagues and me so warmly into your school when we visited recently. We enjoyed watching you in lessons and during breaks, talking about your school with you and your teachers, and looking at your work. Now I want to share with you what we thought.

You go to an outstanding school. It is even better than it was the last time it was inspected. The staff take extremely good care of you and I understand why you say you feel safe. You make excellent progress during your time there and get very good results in your examinations. You know how to stay healthy; we were very impressed by the amount of physical exercise you do. You make an excellent contribution to the community; for instance, we were pleased to hear that many of you help with sports activities at local primary schools.

There are a few things that would make the school even better. We have asked the staff to see if they can help you to get better examination results in English. We have also asked the staff to make sure you get more opportunities for learning independently. You have an important part to play in all of these suggestions.

Thank you again for helping me so much. It was a pleasure to meet you. I wish all of you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Neil
Lead inspector

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