

Bedlingtonshire Community High School

Palace Road, Bedlington, Northumberland, NE22 7DS

Inspection dates

21–22 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching and students' achievement has deteriorated. Weak teaching over time has resulted in students' inadequate progress between Years 7 and 11, particularly in English.
- In 2013 and 2014, the proportion of students attaining five GCSEs at A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, was low.
- The school's use of the pupil premium funding is ineffective. Wide gaps exist between the attainment and progress of disadvantaged students and others in the school and nationally and are not closing quickly enough.
- The quality of support provided for disabled students and those with special educational needs is too variable and as a result, students underachieve.
- Students' literacy skills, particularly in spelling, punctuation and grammar, are underdeveloped.
- The pace of learning is sometimes too slow. Too little work is accomplished in the time available.
- Students are not clear enough about how to improve their work. The quality of teachers' marking is too variable and some is poor.
- Sixth form provision requires improvement. Teaching, particularly of the GCSE courses in English and mathematics, is not consistently good.
- Until recently, leaders and governors have not responded with enough urgency to tackle weaknesses reported at the last inspection.
- Some middle leaders are new to their roles and are in the early stages of developing their skills and quality of provision in their areas of responsibility.

The school has the following strengths

- Through stronger, more focused leadership and increasingly robust management of staff, senior leaders are now tackling weaknesses in teaching.
- Teaching is improving and, as a result, the rate of students' progress is starting to improve.
- Students behave sensibly and display good attitudes to learning. They are kept safe at school.
- Good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is firmly embedded.
- Sixth form students on vocational courses achieve well.
- Governance has improved. Governors have a very accurate view of the school's performance, understand its strengths and weaknesses and now challenge the school more effectively.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons, including three joint observations with the headteacher and the senior team.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of students' written work, especially in Years 9 and 11.
- Meetings were held by the inspectors with the headteacher, senior and middle managers, representatives of the governing body, members of staff, groups of students and representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at many documents, including records of students' attainment and progress, development-planning, safeguarding procedures, records of lesson observations and the school's evaluation of its own effectiveness.
- Eighteen responses to the online (Parent View) questionnaire and responses from a staff questionnaire were taken into account by the inspection team.

Inspection team

John Paddick, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Barbara Waugh	Additional Inspector
Jonathan Parkinson	Additional Inspector
Patrick Hargreaves	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- Bedlingtonshire Community High School is smaller than the average size secondary school.
- It provides a wide range of sixth form courses for over 150 students.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage.
- A below average proportion of students has disabilities or special educational needs.
- The proportion of students who are disadvantaged and supported through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- A small number of students attend specialist alternative provision off site at EOTAS, Choysez and at Skills 4U, where they work in small groups. A few more attend Learn-Fit to train as sport coaches or Northumberland College for vocational courses.
- Recently, there have been many staffing changes and members of staff absent.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school receives assistance from Cramlington Learning Village and Whitley Bay High School to improve the quality of teaching.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' achievement and the quality of teaching so both are consistently good or better, particularly in English by ensuring that:
 - expectations of what students can achieve in the time available in lessons are always high so that students learn at a consistently good pace
 - the skills of teachers and assistants are developed well so they can provide effective support for disabled students and those with special educational needs
 - the quality of teaching of disadvantaged students is highly effective
 - students' work is always marked and that it provides clear guidance so that students know what to do to improve
 - the most-able students are always provided with the challenge they need to reach the higher levels of attainment, particularly in English
 - errors in students' written work, including in their spelling, punctuation and grammar, across all the subjects, are identified and corrected and that students learn from their mistakes
 - teaching in the sixth form, particularly those on GCSE courses, is consistently good and that students are always provided with work that challenges them to achieve well.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management, by:
 - ensuring that leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively to improve the achievement of disadvantaged students and narrow the wide gap between them and non-disadvantaged students in the school and nationally and that governors hold them rigorously to account for doing so
 - developing the roles of new middle leaders in checking on the quality of teaching and developing provision in their areas of responsibility so that it is consistently good.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Until recently, leaders, managers and governors have not acted quickly enough to address many of the improvements that were deemed necessary at the time of the previous inspection. Since that time, achievement has failed to improve and teaching and students' progress, over time, have been inadequate. Although teaching and students' achievement are starting to improve, students are yet to make up for their past underachievement, particularly in English.
- Following detailed discussions with local authority officers regarding the school's poor results in GCSEs in 2014, a far greater sense of urgency to bring about improvement now pervades the school. Leaders and managers, at all levels, are now setting higher targets for students' attainment and progress. Systems to check on the quality of education on offer are becoming increasingly robust so that necessary improvements are identified correctly and checked on regularly to ensure that improvements materialise. The local authority continues to monitor the school's work regularly to ensure that the improvements that have begun are sustained.
- The school now has good systems for measuring how well students are learning. An effective student tracking system enables managers to spot any underachievement and decide where to provide extra help for subjects and groups of students. However, the quality of support provided, such as for disabled students and those with special educational needs, remains too variable.
- Although the school's performance is improving securely, senior leaders have yet to raise the quality of teaching to a consistently good standard. Several changes in staff, as well as in leadership roles, have restricted senior leaders' ability to do so effectively. Some middle leaders are new to their roles and, although keen and enthusiastic, are still at an early stage of developing their roles and taking action to develop provision in their areas of responsibility.
- Stronger leadership of teaching is improving classroom practice. Effective monitoring by leaders clearly informs teachers and their assistants about how to improve their work. Whole-school professional development, often drawing on assistance from other local schools, enables teachers to develop skills to enable them to become more effective classroom practitioners. Where students are still not making enough progress, teachers are given clear improvement targets, which leaders expect to be met.
- Leaders have yet to ensure that the use of pupil premium funding is effective. Gaps in the attainment and progress of disadvantaged students compared to other students in the school, although showing some sign of narrowing, remain far too wide. Despite the school's efforts to promote equality of opportunity therefore, these gaps show that not all students have an equal opportunity to succeed.
- The curriculum requires improvement. It provides plenty of choice for GCSE subjects and prepares students well for life in modern Britain. However, it still does not promote students' good achievement, especially in basic literacy skills. For students who do not relate well to mainstream education, the school funds placements with local providers. These students have the opportunity to work in much smaller groups. The school monitors the behaviour, progress and attendance of students at these extra placements well.
- Leaders and managers have created a climate in school where good conduct can flourish. Attendance has risen and students' conduct around the school is good. Good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is firmly embedded into the subjects that students study and in the daily life of the school. The school is effective in fostering good relations with the community and good relationships between students and staff. There is no evidence of any discrimination.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet all statutory requirements and are effective.
- Students speak positively about the help that they receive in choosing sixth-form subjects and courses or moving on to education post-16 with other providers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - In the past, governors have been too slow in challenging the school to raise achievement. As a result of a combination of local authority direction and the realisation that the school was not doing well enough, they are now far more effective than previously.
 - They now have a very accurate view of how the school performs in comparison to others. They probe and challenge much more effectively and visit the school much more regularly to develop first-hand understanding of improvements made or still needed. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching. However, they still have not challenged the school fully on the impact of the pupil premium funding to increase rates of progress for disadvantaged students.
 - Governors ensure that performance management arrangements are robust and that any salary progressions are agreed only if teachers have met the targets set for them in relation to their students'

progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good; they show a pride in their appearance and arrive punctually for lessons.
- In classrooms, students generally display good attitudes and show that they are keen to learn. They usually concentrate well and listen attentively when the teacher explains what is required of them. Sometimes, students' attitudes in class are exemplary, indicating strongly that they are very eager to do well. Students say that behaviour in class is normally good and only in lessons where they are not interested do they sometimes become bored.
- In corridors at the change over between lessons, outside at breaks and lunchtimes, and when they arrive and leave the site to go home, students' movement is orderly and they conduct themselves well. Students socialise in a particularly mature manner when having lunch.
- Students are keen to take up their responsibilities as student representatives and to discuss and debate issues that are important to them, such as the day-to-day running of the school and the quality of teaching they receive.
- A very small minority of parents and staff who responded to the questionnaires expressed concerns about students' behaviour. The school keeps comprehensive records of behaviour. These clearly demonstrate a strongly improving picture. Inspection evidence indicates that the good behaviour of most students observed during the inspection is typical of day-to-day school life.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say that they feel safe in school and know where to get help when they need it.
- Students fully understand how to keep themselves safe and know about potential risks to their health and welfare. They understand there are different types of bullying; they say that such instances are rare, and that when they do occur, teachers and their assistants deal with them very effectively. The school's records of bullying incidents confirm that they are relatively rare and that effective action is taken.
- The school's checks show that safety is paramount for students who work on alternative education placements off site with other providers. The school ensures that these students are kept safe and behave well.
- Attendance is below average and the proportion of students that are regularly absent is above average. However, attendance is improving quickly. More students are now attending school more regularly. The school's efforts to ensure that students come to school punctually and regularly are effective.

The quality of teaching is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate over time because, since the previous inspection, students have underachieved. Although teaching is improving, several staffing changes have hampered efforts to bring about consistently good teaching. Teaching is still not strong enough to ensure that students make the rapid progress needed to overcome their previous underachievement and to raise their attainment to that of students nationally.
- Expectations of what students can achieve in the time available in lessons are not always high enough to ensure that students learn at a consistently good pace. Sometimes, the pace of learning in lessons is too slow. Teachers do not always plan to get enough done in the time available.
- The quality of teaching, support and guidance for disabled students and those with special educational needs varies too widely. Although some students receive effective support and progress quickly, others do not. Teachers and their assistants do not always have the necessary skills to ensure that these students achieve well.
- Disadvantaged students underachieve because the extra help provided is not of a consistently high enough quality to enable them to do well.
- The marking of students' work is too variable. There are good examples where work is marked frequently and accurately, providing students with clear direction on how to improve. Through good quality marking, students are often provided with additional challenges that help them to secure their understanding of the

topics they are studying even further. However, marking is sometimes of poor quality and some work is not even marked at all. Errors, particularly in students' grammar, punctuation and spelling, are often not picked up. As a result, not all students know how to improve and so continue to make the same mistakes.

- In mathematics and in science the activities provided are often matched well to provide the right amount of challenge to students of varying abilities. As a result, students often do well. However, the teaching of literacy is too variable. Younger students with below average abilities in reading are provided with effective support to enable them to catch up. Students' writing skills, however, continue to be hampered as a result of weaker teaching of basic grammar, punctuation and spelling in many of the subjects that they study. In literacy, the most-able students are not always provided with the challenge they need to reach the higher levels of attainment.
- Teaching ensures that students have a good understanding of the work they are expected to complete. Teachers explain work clearly and use the electronic whiteboards to good effect to present tasks and diagrams. Teachers generally manage their classes well. Relationships between students and adults are good and as a result, students are eager to learn.
- Teaching is improving. Managers have enlisted the help of two high performing schools in providing professional development for teachers and their assistants. Targets for teachers relating to the progress that their students should make are higher than previously. Expectations are generally higher. These factors are lifting the quality of teaching across the school.

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Students enter the school with standards of attainment that are below average. In GCSE examinations in 2013 and 2014, the proportion of students gaining five GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, was 39% and 40% respectively. This was below the government's minimum expectation for attainment in 2013 and just reached them in 2014. This represented inadequate progress from students' previous starting points in several subjects, including in English, French, history and business studies.
- Achievement in English is inadequate. In 2013 and 2014, the proportion of students making expected progress in English was below average. The school's tracking information and inspection evidence shows that current students are beginning to make better progress, but they are still not making good enough progress to make up for their past underachievement.
- Disadvantaged students underachieve. In 2013 and 2014, the proportion of disadvantaged students achieving five GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, was much lower than that of other students. There are wide gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged students compared to non-disadvantaged students in the school and nationally. In 2014, for example, disadvantaged students' GCSE results were a grade and a half lower than non-disadvantaged students in the school in English and two grades in mathematics. Compared to non-disadvantaged students nationally, the difference was more than two grades in both subjects. Data of students currently in the school indicate that the progress of disadvantaged students still lags behind that of other students. Gaps in achievement are starting to narrow, but too slowly.
- In 2013 and 2014, the inadequate progress of students with disabilities and those with special educational needs was reflected in their poor GCSE results. Although there have been some recent improvements, this group is still underachieving because the quality of teaching and support for their learning, is still too inconsistent.
- In the past, the most-able students have underachieved. These students are now starting to make better progress because they are set more challenging targets. Although the work they complete in science and mathematics often presents the most-able students with the challenge they need to achieve well, in English this is not the case as many are not stretched to reach their potential. Some of the students who entered the school with the highest literacy levels, for example, are therefore still behind where they should be.
- In all subjects, the expectations of the rate of students' progress of all abilities have risen. Leaders and managers are now targeting progress to be at least in line with national rates. Students are now making better progress than previously. There is already a much brighter picture emerging in Years 7 to 9, where a reading programme aimed at accelerating students' reading skills is starting to improve students' skills in phonics (the sounds that letters make) and word recognition rapidly. This is helping the many students who join the school well behind where they should be in reading to catch up successfully. By Year 9, almost all students can now read relatively fluently.
- Students' written work in all year groups is of variable quality, but is improving overall. It is now generally

well set out and students are provided with more opportunities for writing at length to practise their skills. Although leaders and managers check on students' work carefully to ensure that these improvements are being sustained, too little attention is given to making sure students' spelling, grammar and punctuation improve at a good enough rate and this continues to hamper their achievement overall.

- Students have well-developed numerical skills to enable them to calculate effectively, including in the other subjects that they study. Students generally do better in mathematics than in English because teaching is more effective. Early entry at GCSE is used well to maximise students' performance and provide a solid base for further studies, for example at A-level. Progress in mathematics is now frequently good.
- The small number of students educated in alternative provision make good progress because they receive good quality specialised teaching.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- The sixth form requires improvement because there is too much variation in students' performance. In 2014, results of Level 3 vocational courses reflect good progress over time, while AS and A-level results reflect expected, rather than good, rates of progress in almost all subjects. Results for the small number of students re-sitting GCSE English and mathematics have been disappointing.
- The school's tracking system and inspection evidence indicate that the current predictions of students' outcomes in 2015 will be similar to those in 2014, but the results for those re-sitting GCSE English and mathematics are on track to improve.
- The curriculum enables students to choose from a wide range of AS and A-level subjects and some vocational courses. A 'gateway' course provides those students with weak GCSE results with an opportunity to improve to the point that they can undertake more advanced work.
- Students enter the sixth form with GCSE results that are lower than average for study at A-level. The school now provides much more systematic advice and guidance to students to prevent them from starting courses that they are not capable of completing. This has resulted in better outcomes in AS subjects and better retention rates into Year 13.
- Although teaching is sometimes good, overall it requires improvement. Teaching is usually well planned, productive and often linked to the world outside the classroom. Students are keen to learn and display mature attitudes in class. However, teaching does always not challenge students to enable them to achieve well, particularly those on GSCE courses.
- The recently appointed sixth-form leader is managing the provision well. He is making effective checks on students' attainment and progress and knows where extra support is needed. He ensures that safety requirements are met fully, that most students display positive attitudes and many succeed with their chosen courses.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	122360
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	453560

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	766
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	165
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Trevor Weldon
Headteacher	Stephen Griffiths
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2013
Telephone number	01670 822625
Fax number	01670 829378
Email address	admin@bedlingtonshire.northumberland.sch.uk

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