

Furrowfield School

Whitehill Drive, Felling, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE10 9RZ

Inspection dates 17–18 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The vast majority of students in both key stages make good progress from their individual starting points. In mathematics and science, some students make outstanding progress.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Students say they feel safe. They also say there is always someone to talk to about any problems they might have and that staff are 'canny'.
- Parents are pleased with what the school provides for their children and how well they are learning.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Leaders are working to ensure there is only top quality teaching through additional training for staff at every level across the school.
- The new headteacher knows the strengths and areas for development within the school well. This is because his role as deputy headteacher gave him time to fully analyse what worked well and what needed improving. There is a united, positive attitude and visible drive by the senior leaders and the governing body to make learning and progress for the students the best it can possibly be. There is outstanding capacity for this school to improve even more.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small number of students are persistently absent.
- Currently, some students do not achieve as well in English as they do in mathematics and science.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 10 lessons, one of which was observed jointly with the headteacher. They also made a number of other short visits to classrooms and other learning activities.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, students, senior leaders and staff. A conversation was held by telephone with a representative of the local authority.
- A range of school documents was examined including the school improvement plan, the school's data of students' achievement, records relating to behaviour, safeguarding, attendance and the minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors took account of the 10 responses from parents to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), a parent survey conducted by the school and responses from the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Michele Crichton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Janice Stephenson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Furrowfield is a day and residential school for students aged between 11 and 16 years.
- The school caters for students with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties and many have been identified as having additional learning difficulties, such as communication disorders and attention deficit disorders.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- Currently, 12 students are accommodated in the boarding facility for either four or two nights each week during term time.
- There are 12 students who are looked after by the local authority.
- Students occasionally have dual registration with other educational establishments because of the assessment procedures undertaken by the school on behalf of the local authority.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is well above average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from armed service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority).
- The majority of students are of White British heritage.
- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance further and reduce the number of students who persistently do not attend school, by:
 - ensuring that more students have access to a practical curriculum that engages and interests them, and develops their English skills in relevant ways
 - ensuring greater liaison with students' previous schools to gain knowledge of their pattern of attendance and strategies already used
 - working in partnership with families, especially those who are harder to reach.
- Improve students' standards in English, by:
 - ensuring that there are more meaningful links made across all subject and curriculum areas
 - providing a variety of relevant and interesting reasons for students to read and write
 - fully utilising the great amount of additional training that is taking place within the school to develop reading through one-to-one supported opportunities.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students arrive at Furrowfield School with different levels of attainment but many are well below national expectations. Students can arrive at any time in the school year and from any year group. Regardless of their gender, background or ability, they achieve more the longer they are at Furrowfield and the better they attend the school.
- The majority of students make good progress and some make outstanding progress from their individual starting points in mathematics and science. For some students their very low level literacy skills at the start, coupled with low attendance, result in their standards in English being lower than their standards in mathematics and science.
- Since the start of the school year, there has been an intense focus on Year 7 students and those who receive the pupil premium to improve their reading and writing. Many new resources have been bought, there has been increased staff training and additional help from learning support staff, including some one-to-one support, where necessary. This is showing an increase in the rate that students make progress in reading and writing but these developments need more time to take full effect.
- The curriculum is varied and balanced but is limited in the opportunities for students to read and write in subjects other than in English. This hampers the much-needed progress students need to make in this subject.
- As students move through the school, they are well supported for their next steps in education or training. By the end of Key Stage 4, all students leave school with at least one form of accreditation or qualification.
- The curriculum has vocational areas of study, such as construction and catering as well as access to GCSE level qualifications. The Furrowfield Leavers Preparation Programme (FLPP) and the preparatory Duke of Edinburgh course which is called Adventure Service Challenge (ASC) also helps students to develop a range of practical, academic and life skills.
- Evidence shows that students achieve more if they have attended regularly and have fully benefited from the good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching that is on offer in the school.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is generally good and sometimes it is outstanding. In a small number of lessons it requires improvement.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers have good knowledge of their subject, students' individual learning needs are known precisely and learning is interesting because of exciting activities. Teachers and support staff use a wide range of good questioning techniques to ensure that students understand the topic and make students consider whether their answers are good enough to answer the question.
- In one outstanding art lesson, cross-curricular links with information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics and art helped students to have a deep level of understanding and apply their knowledge from a range of subjects. There are regular checks on learning throughout the lesson and students must justify their opinions and give reasons for their answers.
- Where teaching is not as good, teachers spend too long talking, there is too much recapping of work which takes up lesson time and work is not hard enough to ensure that all students make the best progress they can.
- Mathematics and science are taught well by specialist teachers who enthuse and engage students well. Progress in these subjects is secure and it is tracked finely to ensure that good achievements are made.

- Students' progress in English has been hampered for a variety of reasons. In the past, because of disruptions to staffing, the quality of teaching in English has been inconsistent. This has resulted in some students not making the same good progress in English as they have made in mathematics and science. However, recent staff appointments have remedied this and standards in English are now improving, although this improvement is again at an early stage. Nevertheless, students who do not attend well miss out on being able to develop good reading and writing skills and students in Key Stage 4 miss vital lessons and learning that could secure them higher levels of accreditation.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- There is a good atmosphere in the school. It is calm, orderly and evident that good relationships exist between staff and students. Behaviour routines are well established and bullying is not an issue. Students say they feel safe because there are always staff nearby to encourage good behaviour or to manage behaviour that is not acceptable.
- It is considered important that everyone is an individual but also important for everyone to work together as team. Some students find difficulty with these clear boundary lines.
- Students appreciate the recent changes in the school and are keen to talk about the new design and technology room and refurbished residential area. Students say they have a voice in the school to which staff listen. They have made decisions, for example, concerning the changes to their school uniform, changes regarding the choice of lunchtime menus and the range of books in the new library.
- Many students arrive at school regularly and punctually. There are a number of students who persist in not attending which affects their progress and achievements at school.
- As students mature, they learn to self-monitor and learn to be more in control of their own behaviour. Throughout all year groups staff support and promote this independence. Behaviour management is consistent. Older students help to guide younger students who still continue to behave in ways that others have outgrown.
- The vast majority of parents are supportive of the school. Many recognise that their child is making good progress in their learning, and for some this is the first time in their education that they have experienced this.

The leadership and management are good

- There is a shared drive to bring about further school improvement and raise standards from a visionary headteacher, an ambitious senior leadership team and a challenging governing body. The school's plans demonstrate this well. So too are the clear links for setting targets for staff appraisals and robust arrangements for the management of teachers' performance and progression along the pay scale.
- Leaders and managers are ensuring that teaching is improving by providing additional training throughout the school and by joining up with other schools to ensure that assessment methods are accurate. They are now also conducting regular scrutiny of students' books to ensure that all are making the best progress they can. However, more could be done to use the recent developments in staff skills better to improve students' literacy more rapidly.
- Although there are many positive changes and developments in the school, these are at various stages and have not had time to take full effect and show in students' achievements.
- The local authority recognises what Furrowfield provides for students and so it offers only light touch support to the school as and when it is needed.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good and is a strength in the school. Regular experiences promote the importance of good relationships and an acceptance of difference. For example, all students attend assembly which takes place every morning and all

students eat together with staff to discuss the day.

- The promotion of students' equality of opportunity is good because each student is viewed as an individual. The school does not tolerate discrimination. It is clear that everyone is given an equal chance to succeed. For example, there are now a number of inspirational visitors to the school to encourage all students to be the best they can be.
- The governance of the school:
 - Governance is good. There was unanimous support from the governing body to appoint the new headteacher from his previous role. Governors are fully supportive and energetic in the drive to shape the school for the future and for further improvements to take place. The governing body is providing support and challenge in equal measure to ensure that all changes are ones for the better. They are knowledgeable about data and the progress and achievement of all student groups across the school. Governors understand the value that money from the pupil premium funding brings to promote achievement for those who are entitled to it. Governors understand the importance of improving the quality of teaching. Consequently, good teachers and roles with focused accountability are rewarded through the school's performance management structure. Governors wish to secure only high quality teaching and rigorous accountability within the school. Any underperformance is tackled through support, additional training and regular monitoring. They are also fully prepared to make difficult decisions and go through other appropriate procedures. The governing body ensures that its statutory duties are met and safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements, for example, through regular monitoring and by ensuring training is up to date.

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	108426
Local authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	400979

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	73
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Munro
Headteacher	Steve Thursby
Date of previous school inspection	18 November 2009
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