

Conyers School

Green Lane, Yarm, Stockton on Tees, TS15 9ET

Inspection dates 10–11 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The ambitious vision and excellent leadership of the headteacher create an ethos which motivates students and staff continuously to do their best.
- Students' attainment has been significantly above the national average since the previous inspection. The vast majority of students make good progress from their starting points and their achievement is good.
- Students' behaviour is exemplary in classrooms and during social times. Movement around the school is orderly and calm.
- Outstanding pastoral care ensures students feel secure and are safe in school.
- The sixth form is good and results are improving quickly. It is highly successful in preparing students to move on to higher education, including prestigious universities and Oxbridge, Further Education colleges, training and employment.
- Excellent relationships, high expectations of behaviour and effort underpin good quality teaching and learning. Support staff make a strong contribution to the achievement and well-being of students.
- A constant focus on the professional development of staff is central to the school's drive for high-quality teaching, outstanding pastoral support and the successful leadership of both senior and middle leaders.
- Together, senior and middle leaders provide excellent support for the school's development. Rapid improvement in the quality of middle leadership saw students' achievement rise steeply in 2014.
- Governors are very well informed about teaching and learning in the school. They hold the school rigorously to account for its performance, share the headteacher's ambitious vision, and provide excellent support for its development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough of the most able students attain the highest grades across the curriculum.
- Disadvantaged students do not always progress at the same rate as other students, especially in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 42 lessons or parts of lessons, three of which were jointly observed with senior staff.
- Discussions were held with members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders, staff and students.
- Inspectors observed the school at work, and looked at a range of documentation, including that relating to the school's safeguarding policies and procedures. They also looked at information about students' progress and attainment, the school's view of its own performance and the school development plan.
- Inspectors examined students' work and discussed their work with them during classroom visits.
- Inspectors took account of the 140 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also took account of the 102 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Moira Fitzpatrick, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Alexandra Hook	Additional Inspector
William John Frain	Additional Inspector
Kevin Broadfoot	Additional Inspector
Graeme Clarke	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students eligible for support through the pupil premium is low. The pupil premium provides additional funding to support disadvantaged students, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and students looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is low.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The school met the government's floor standards in 2013. These are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 11.
- The school makes use of off-site provision for students who study engineering in Years 10 to 13.
- The school takes a lead in the local authority in providing middle leadership training and improving teaching in other schools.
- The school has experienced a high volume of staff turnover in the last two years. During that time 30 teachers have left the school and have been replaced with new staff.
- Conyers School converted to become an academy school on 1 February 2013. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' achievement even further, especially that of the most able and disadvantaged students, by:
 - ensuring there is greater consistency in the provision for most able students, so it matches the most successful practice in the school and fully stretches and challenges these students to reach the highest grades across the curriculum
 - ensuring disadvantaged students make similar progress to other students in the school from their individual starting points, especially in English and mathematics
 - intervening in a timely manner to accelerate the progress of these groups of students if their progress slows and risk of underachievement has been identified.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors share an ambitious vision for the school's development and provide outstanding leadership to achieve this. Their vision is increasingly shared by staff at all levels. The headteacher has been relentless in her determination to improve the quality of teaching and learning to the highest level since her appointment in 2012. This year's results at GCSE and in Advanced level courses, both of which have risen significantly, are testimony to the success of the headteacher's drive for better outcomes for students.
- Astute monitoring of the work of departments has provided senior leaders with an incisive overview of where improvement was needed to ensure that all middle leaders are as effective as the best. Good practice is shared regularly through continuous review of departmental effectiveness, with the result that middle leadership is increasingly outstanding.
- Robust systems to track students' progress are increasingly well used by middle leaders and teachers to ensure that students are on track to achieve their targets. Occasionally, a slowing in the progress of some of the most able and some groups of disadvantaged students has not been picked up quickly enough, so that they have not always reached the levels predicted for them.
- Excellent management of teachers' performance ensures a good balance of support and challenge. Training programmes are excellent and valued by all staff, who aspire to meet the school's high expectations of teaching. The programme of induction and training for the many newly-qualified staff who have joined the school in the last two years is robust, ensuring that new staff are well supported to reach the school's high expectations for teaching. Staff morale is high and many staff commented in their questionnaires that they were very proud to be a part of this, in their words, 'highly-successful school'.
- Pupil premium funding is increasingly well used to support disadvantaged students to make the same progress as others in the school. A range of support is in place to ensure that these students attend regularly and have opportunities to join the breakfast club and after-school homework clubs. While the gap between the attainment of these students and their peers in school narrowed significantly this year, the progress that these students make in English and mathematics does not compare favourably with that of their peers in school or of non-disadvantaged students nationally.
- The curriculum is reviewed regularly so that it is responsive to students' needs and aspirations. It is rich in opportunities to prepare students for the future through a vast range of courses, work experience opportunities and learning about the diversity of life in modern British society. The strong emphasis on using literacy and numeracy in other subjects reinforces these crucial skills and is a key factor in students' above-average attainment at the end of Key Stage 4.
- The many and diverse extra-curricular opportunities are valued by students of all ages. These enriching experiences, together with regular opportunities for reflection and service to others, contribute extremely well to the school's excellent promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school provides very good advice and guidance for students at regular intervals as they move through the school. This ensures that students can make fully informed decisions about progression routes, and that their subject choices match their aspirations and interests.
- The school draws on support and advice from within the local authority, where it is seen as a centre of good practice. Through this link the school supports other schools in the locality, especially with regard to improving teaching and the development of middle managers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors show an exceptional commitment to the school's ambitions for improvement and along with leaders and staff promote equality of opportunity well. They are extremely knowledgeable about the work of the school, including its performance and the quality of teaching. This equips them to challenge the school over any variations in performance. Governors ensure that funding is judiciously allocated, so that the school gets good value from spending decisions. For example, they understand how changes to spending on provision for disadvantaged students is helping to narrow the gap between their progress and attainment and that of others in the school. Governors are rigorous in holding the headteacher to account and are closely involved in agreeing the salary progression of teaching staff. They ensure the students and staff are safe on site and, following an administrative weakness, have now made sure that safeguarding requirements are in the process of being fully met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. It is outstanding both in and out of classrooms. School records confirm that this is the case over time. Students look after each other very well by following the excellent example set by staff. They socialise well with older students looking out for younger ones around the school site. For example, Year 8 students relish the opportunity to be buddies to Year 7 students when they join the school, providing advice and support to help the youngest students settle in quickly.
- Excellent attitudes to learning make a positive contribution to students' good and sometimes outstanding progress. Students ensure that time is well used for learning in lessons by listening closely, responding enthusiastically to teachers' questions and persevering to complete tasks. Students' respect for each other's right to learn and to express views different from their own is a hallmark of the school's excellent ethos.
- Students have a thorough understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They are very well taught to assess risks to their well-being, for example, from social media and the internet. Students of all ages show a good understanding of the different forms of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying and cyber-bullying. They say that bullying does happen, but that it is rare and is dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- Students are taught to uphold British values of tolerance, fairness and the rules by which everyone has to abide. This is evident in the harmonious, civilised atmosphere around the school.
- Attendance is well above average and exclusions are rare.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Some delay in staff recruitment procedures, prevents this aspect of its work from being outstanding. Nevertheless, excellent pastoral care ensures that students are very well known to staff, who are alert to their needs and any changes in their behaviour or performance and take prompt action to deal with students' concerns. Students speak highly of the support and care they receive, and parents overwhelmingly agree that their children are cared for well.
- Students whose circumstances put them at risk of becoming vulnerable are well supported by good collaboration between special educational needs staff, form tutors and class teachers, who share important information promptly. This ensures that these students receive consistent and appropriate support to achieve well.

The quality of teaching is good

- Senior leaders have developed some exceptional practice to improve the quality and consistency of teaching across the school. New, and more effective practices, are being developed and shared by staff so that teaching in all subjects, including literacy, reading and mathematics, is improving well year on year.
- High expectations, based on a thorough understanding of students' needs, are hallmarks of lessons where students make outstanding progress. For example, students in a Year 8 art lesson were very well challenged by carefully-targeted questions to think deeply about the terminology they were using. This approach rapidly developed students' skills and understanding. By the end of the lesson, every student was successful and had made excellent progress in their ability to describe and explain accurately the various painting techniques they had studied.
- Students learn much from each other in those lessons where high-quality questioning probes their thinking and requires them to make connections with earlier learning. Year 10 students progressed at rapid rate in a history lesson where they shared their knowledge about threats to the economy of Europe in the 1920s. As well as demonstrating very good recall of previous learning, they were eager to learn from each other's ideas and listened very closely to each other. This approach prepares students very well for independent work as seen in the work in books and note-taking of students as the lessons continued.
- Good and sometimes excellent subject knowledge is used well to promote outstanding learning for students. For example, in a physical education theory lesson, Year 13 students rose well to the challenge to explain sports performance through mental attitude and physiological changes. The teacher's deep understanding of the topic allowed him skilfully to present factual information to extend to students' ideas and help them make connections rapidly, so that they were confident to ask and answer questions from the teacher and fellow students, which further accelerated their learning.
- The use of computer tablet technology is having a marked impact on the rate of students' learning in many lessons. Year 9 students made rapid translations between English and French text, and were able to quickly see whether or not this was accurate in the context of the passage. Students were engrossed by working this way and demonstrated high levels of independence, which gave the teacher the opportunity

to support students to improve their translations even further so that progress in the lesson was excellent. The use of ipads for learning is rapidly gaining momentum across the school as staff share the successes of this approach.

- Where some teaching requires improvement this is because work does not match the different levels of ability in the class, or because assessments of students' learning during lessons are not fully accurate. As a result, some students are not sufficiently well challenged, while others are not well supported to complete work and their learning over time is, therefore, not as strong.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the school with attainment that is significantly above average. In 2013, performance at the end of Year 11 was significantly above the national average for students gaining at least five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics. A slight dip in performance in 2013 has been successfully addressed, and provisional results in 2014 show a higher proportion gaining these grades.
- The proportion of the most able students reaching the highest levels in GCSE examinations in 2013 was significantly above the national average in art, history, geography and engineering. 2014 results indicate an improvement in the number of subjects where students attain at the highest level. These include biology, chemistry, physics and computing. The proportion of students reaching the highest levels in English lags behind that of other subjects.
- The proportion of Year 11 students who made expected progress, and the proportion making more than expected progress in 2013 was in line with national averages overall, but significantly below average for boys, disadvantaged students and some students with special educational needs. However, results for 2014 show a steep improvement in the progress of boys and of students who have special educational needs, to significantly above average. The progress of disadvantaged students remains significantly below that of others in the school, though it is in line with the national average for this group nationally.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is used effectively to help the students for whom it is intended to improve their reading, writing and numeracy skills quickly so that they reach the level expected for their age by the end of Year 7. Initiatives, such as the recently introduced reading programme, are helping these students to gain the necessary skills to access the rest of the curriculum alongside their peers.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are well supported to make expected, and sometimes more than expected, progress in their learning. In many lessons, teaching is well matched to their needs and they are able to succeed alongside their peers.
- Students supported through pupil premium funding do not yet achieve as well as their peers in school and on average are about one GCSE grade behind them. The gap between their performance and that of others is narrowing in many subjects, and especially so in the 2014 results. The attainment and progress of disadvantaged students matches, and sometimes exceeds, that of non-disadvantaged students nationally.
- Reading is actively promoted across the school so that students develop and refine their skills through frequent practice. They read for pleasure in tutor time, and from many sources, including ipads, for research in lessons. The high-level reading skills of the vast majority allow students to work independently at a good rate.
- The school has used early GCSE entry for English and mathematics, which has seen improved grades for a proportion of the students entered for both subjects.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good, because students benefit from good advice on which courses to choose, which motivates them to do their best. Performance at the end of Year 12 and at the end of Year 13 is improving year on year, though there still remains some inconsistency in the level of performance across different subjects.

The sixth form provision is good

- Students' achievement has risen year on year since 2012. The proportions of students gaining A* to B and A* to E grades in GCE Advanced level courses compares favourably with national average. Results for 2014, show a further increase in the proportion of students gaining A or A* grades. Good and sometimes outstanding teaching makes a strong contribution to students' learning and good achievement. Students are encouraged to become increasingly independent as they progress through the sixth form which accelerates their acquisition of knowledge and skills and prepares them well for life beyond the sixth form.
- Staying on rates are increasing, both from Year 11 to Year 12 and into Year 13, as a result of the rich

curriculum provision now available. Besides a wide range of AS and A-level courses, students have many opportunities to extend their learning through a huge range of extra-curricular courses and enrichment activities which promote their personal, social and employability skills well. Guidance into sixth form courses is rigorous and comprehensive. The three week 'tester time' in Year 12, which allows students to decide if their courses are right for them, is increasing students' confidence to join the sixth form, knowing there is scope for change in such important decisions. This system ensures that all students follow courses which meet their needs and aspirations, including those who aspire to enter Cambridge and Oxford universities.

- Students are very well supported by tutors and teachers, who make regular checks on the progress of individuals and follow this up with one-to-one meetings to encourage and support students to do even better, and iron out any difficulties that may arise. Students speak highly of the support they receive and comment on how much it helps them stay on track and feel confident about what they need to do to improve further. Post 18 and careers guidance effectively support students to make the right choices for their destinations beyond the sixth form. Students who join the sixth form without at least a grade C in English and mathematics follow a programme during Year 12 to enable them to attain this.

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	139318
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	449217

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1,317
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	233
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeremy Owen-Hughes
Headteacher	Louise Spellman
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
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