

# Wolsingham School and Community College

Leazes Lane, Wolsingham, Bishop Auckland, County Durham

**Inspection dates** 21–22 January 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
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.

- School leaders provide good and effective leadership. There is strong capacity for the school to continue to improve.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and is increasingly meeting the needs of all students.
- Students are well behaved. When properly stimulated, they display very positive attitudes to learning.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students' progress is tracked carefully. This helps the school identify students who need additional support promptly.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress as a result of well-targeted support.
- Students enjoy reading and there is a strong culture of reading at the school.
- Most students reach a good standard of attainment at GCSE. Attainment is continuing to improve.
- Students receive very effective advice and guidance to help them make informed choices about their next steps.
- Most students talk with animation and insight about their work and life at the school.
- The leadership of the sixth form is strong. Leaders are taking appropriate action to address the imbalance in outcomes between academic and vocational subjects.
- The school prepares students well for life in modern Britain.
- Governors know the school well and challenge leaders rigorously.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching, particularly in science, is not consistently strong enough to ensure that all students make the rapid progress they should.
- Middle leaders' monitoring has not ironed out some inconsistencies in teaching quality.
- Although improving, in the sixth form there is still inconsistency between the performance and progress of students following academic courses and those following vocational ones.
- Written feedback to students is improving but it is not yet consistent across the school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 30 lessons across a range of curriculum areas and year groups. A small number were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors saw registration, assemblies and observed how students behaved in and out of lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, representatives of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body, senior staff, middle leaders and a representative from the local authority. Informal discussions also took place with staff and students.
- Discussions were held with groups of students across the school about their educational experience and behaviour. Samples of students' work were scrutinised, including in lessons. Inspectors listened to younger students read.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including the school's view of how well it is doing, development planning, students' progress tracking, the monitoring of teaching, performance management, staff training and records of governing body meetings. They also looked at records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. A range of information was uploaded from the school's website.
- The inspection took account of 93 responses on the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View). Inspectors also received a range of messages from parents expressing their views and four telephone conversations were conducted by the lead inspector with parents.

## Inspection team

Mark Evans, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paul Welford	Additional Inspector
Jim Hall	Additional Inspector
Steven Goldsmith	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Wolsingham School and Community College is a smaller than average size community school and serves a rural area to the west of Durham.
- A very large proportion of students are of White British heritage and the remainder is from a range of minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students whose first language is not English is very low.
- The proportion of students who receive support through pupil premium funding (additional funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals and students who are looked after by the local authority) is similar to the national average.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs is slightly above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- Most students travel to school by 'bus and some travel considerable distances.
- A very small number of students attend alternative off-site provision.
- A building programme has just begun at the school. This has resulted in a temporary reduction in the accommodation available.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, so it is consistently good or better in order to ensure that:
  - all students are challenged by teachers' consistently high expectations to achieve, especially in science
  - teachers' assessment of students' work is always accurate and is used effectively to plan new learning
  - marking and feedback consistently inform and challenge students to make improvements in their work.
- Improve leadership and management further by ensuring that:
  - middle leaders' checks on the quality of teaching are always rigorous and lead to very specific actions to develop teachers' knowledge and skills.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides clear and strong leadership. Working with the senior and, increasingly, the middle leaders, she has created a culture of high expectations and equality of opportunity that is helping all students reach their potential. There is capacity in the leadership at the school to help assure further success.
- Attainment and progress are improving and recent results, especially at GCSE, are almost all above the national average. Leaders are aware of the inconsistencies in the quality of some subjects, notably in science, and are working effectively to deal with this. They have combined short-term strategies to minimise any negative impact on students, with longer term actions that will help ensure sustained improvement.
- Leaders know the school well. The school's own assessment of its performance is based on secure, measurable evidence. This information is used carefully to plan for further improvement.
- Leaders use data effectively to regularly analyse the performance of specific groups of students in the school. At regular meetings senior and middle leaders discuss the performance of students. This helps leaders and staff to identify promptly those students who need particular support. This sequence of events is followed up by robust evaluation of the impact on achievement.
- The performance management of teachers is effective and this is reflected in pay progression. The school encourages staff to improve the quality of their work through carefully tailored training which addresses issues identified during the performance management process. This is increasingly improving the effectiveness of the school.
- Effective and carefully- targeted support has meant that students with special educational needs achieve well at the school. Leaders are relentless in the pursuit of equality of opportunity for every student.
- Leaders very carefully monitor the attendance and progress of the very small number of students who attend off-site provision and its appropriateness frequently assessed.
- Middle leaders are increasingly playing a key role in monitoring the work of their teams as their leadership skills develop. However, some variability in the rate of sustained improvement reflects the inconsistency around the level of challenge provided by a few middle leaders to their teams.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and helps students understand their place both in modern Britain and the wider world. It meets the needs of students. Over the last three years, the school has reduced the number of vocational subjects it offers in both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Although this process is not complete, the curriculum is now more balanced and better prepares students for their next steps in learning, training or employment.
- Leaders at the school have ensured that the independent advice and guidance that students receive is well matched to their needs and helps them prepare for the next steps in their lives. Students report that they particularly enjoy these regular advice and guidance sessions and can see how they help them make informed choices.
- The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities. These include a range of sports and trips as well as opportunities to be involved in voluntary and fund raising activities such as a recent appeal for funds for a local hospital.
- All aspects of safeguarding, including those relating to the appointment of staff are monitored rigorously.
- The website meets statutory requirements but the descriptions of subjects and activities on offer lack the 'big picture' coherence associated with a whole-school approach that is rigorously quality assured.
- Parents are generally very positive about the work of the school. The Parents Reference Group meets regularly with leaders and careful note is taken of parents' views. Parents report that they have seen a significant improvement in the school over the past three years. They say that the quality of care and the information provided by the school are much improved. Parents who spoke with inspectors reported increasing satisfaction with the quality of teaching and learning.
- The local authority provides effective support to the school. Officers of the local authority regularly visit and provide training for staff. For example, middle leaders have been supported in developing their skills in assessing the quality of their teams' assessment and marking.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance at the school is good. The governing body is very well led. Governors know the school well not only through the information they receive from the headteacher and her team but also through more direct evidence resulting from visits and governors' links to particular areas of the school.
  - Governors are very well aware of and realistic about the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

The governing body is fully aware of the weaknesses in science and is fully supportive of the leaders' strategy for addressing these.

- Governors monitor the progress of disadvantaged students and they understand that the overall achievement and attainment gap needs to continue to narrow. They are clear about which of the school's strategies with this group of students has worked most successfully.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's performance management strategy and its role in improving teaching and learning.
- Governors ensure that the school meets statutory requirements for safeguarding.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. The school has recently moved on to a single site while a building project is undertaken. Students take care and move around the school with keen awareness of the needs of others. They take a pride in their surroundings; surfaces are free of graffiti or litter.
- Students are courteous and friendly and demonstrate genuine concern for each other. Student voice is a strong feature of the school with regular, productive meetings taking place between students and senior staff. Positive outcomes from student suggestions often result. A student mentoring scheme allows younger students to receive welcome support from older students.
- Students are keen to learn and enjoy participating in learning activities. They are able to talk in an informed and articulate way about their learning. They are complimentary about the independent advice and guidance they are given by the school to inform their decisions about next steps.
- Attendance is above average and continues to improve. Punctuality is good. Students say that they enjoy coming to school. The school carefully monitors students' patterns of attendance and key staff interview students when they return from an absence to help ensure that any barriers to attendance are removed. The attendance of the very small group of students at off-site provision is monitored daily. The school receives a weekly log of progress for each student.
- Exclusions are low and reducing. The school's internal inclusion space is carefully supervised and its use stringently monitored. Students continue to follow their study programmes when out of main stream lessons and their prompt return to classes is carefully managed.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students are clear about how to keep themselves safe, including when on-line. They are confident that if they had any concerns that they would be listened to carefully and their concerns followed up. Students report that they receive regular information in assemblies, lessons and registration about strategies to keep themselves safe. Numerous posters and displays around the school provide sources of further information and guidance.
- Those students interviewed said that they did not consider bullying an issue. They reported that they could rely on adults at the school to support and care for them should an incident of bullying occur. School records confirm that bullying is infrequent and is dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Systems for safeguarding students are effective. This includes checks on the recruitment of staff. These checks are rigorous and monitored regularly. All staff have received statutory safeguarding training and are issued with and sign for a copy of 'Keeping children safe in education'.
- The school's pastoral support for students is strong. Students with special educational needs are very carefully monitored to ensure that as far as possible barriers to learning are removed and they make the progress that they should.

## The quality of teaching is good

- Much of the teaching over time is good. In many lessons, students are engaged and they make rapid progress. They develop a love of learning and explore complex ideas and acquire a range of useful skills. However, occasionally this is not the case. Teaching and learning in science, for example, is too variable so that students do not make the same consistently good progress as seen elsewhere.
- Where teachers' expectations are high, students are engaged and make rapid progress. In these lessons, inspectors see teachers and other adults use questioning expertly to develop students' ideas and deepen their thinking. These lessons are characterised by teachers asking 'why' and 'how' rather than 'what'. Often in the best learning seen students take real delight and intense pleasure in unravelling knotty problems and exploring a range of solutions.

- Teachers use school data and other detailed knowledge about their students to set challenging work. They monitor students' progress during the lesson and are adept at making changes to their teaching in response to students' developing ideas and interests. Where teaching is less certain, these responses from students are less likely to be taken up by teachers.
- A whole-school approach to marking and feedback is evident. Students welcome this because, when used well by staff, it helps students see what they need to do to improve. There is still some way to go before the approach is applied consistently across all classes and subjects. Middle leaders have a key role to play in monitoring this important aspect of teaching and learning, ensuring that all marking and feedback is focused and helps students improve.
- The school has developed a whole-school approach to literacy and the teaching of spelling. This is a relatively new initiative but students report that they enjoy the higher profile that language has across the school. A 'word of the week' is shared in form time and a 'Call my bluff' type quiz format encourages students to become familiar with new words. Evidence from students' work books and folders suggests that there is more scope for this shared approach to the teaching and marking of spelling to have a positive impact on students' accuracy.
- Numeracy also has a high profile across the school. Inspectors saw a number of examples of cross-curricular activity involving number. For example, the importance of the use of the twenty-four hour clock in the travel industry was emphasised and practised by students in a Year 11 Travel and Tourism lesson.
- Additional adults were generally well used in the lessons observed by inspectors. Where their work is most effective, teachers' planning ensures that the contributions these colleagues make are carefully targeted on supporting and developing students' skills. Occasionally, their contribution was unfocussed and the positive impact was reduced.
- Despite the relatively cramped conditions that have resulted from the current building work, teaching spaces and corridors are attractive and welcoming. Many bright and colourful posters support learning and positive attitudes along with up-to-date examples of students' work.

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students enter the school with levels of prior attainment which are above national averages.
- Figures for the proportion of students making expected progress in English and mathematics for 2014 are above the national average.
- Most students reach a good standard of attainment in GCSE in terms of five grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics. Over the last three years this has been above the national average. The quality of teaching and evidence from internal assessment information suggest that this trend will continue.
- Disadvantaged students attained very similar grades in English and just under one grade lower in mathematics in GCSE, when compared with their peers in school and with other students nationally. School data suggest that the gap in mathematics will continue to close.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress from their starting points because of targeted support and timely intervention.
- All students read very regularly and use the library heavily. Last year there were 10,500 books issued from the library. The school has used its Year 7 'catch up' funding in part to support this venture. The school continues this emphasis on reading and is establishing a culture where reading is valued by all.
- The school uses early entry for a very few students in English and mathematics. This supports the most-able students' achievement as they respond well to the challenge and the opportunity to experience GCSE slightly earlier than usual.

### The sixth form provision

is good

- The leadership of the sixth form is strong. There is a clear strategy for developing the curriculum so that it more appropriately reflects the needs of students. Leaders are acting to address the significant differences in student success between academic and vocational courses. There is a dedicated post-16 teaching and learning group that monitors the impact of teaching and learning in the sixth form.
- Students' progress in the sixth form is regularly monitored and they receive very regular feedback about their progress. High-quality independent advice and guidance helps them make choices and prepare themselves for the next stages of their learning, training or employment. In addition, students have scheduled weekly recreation sessions. During this time, a wide range of activities is on offer to support sixth form students' personal development. This includes visits from local universities. Students also have

opportunities to attend summer schools at universities further afield, including Oxford and Cambridge.

- Most teachers in the sixth form have high expectations and student attainment is good and improving. Students report that they have a high regard for their teachers. Progress for students following vocational courses is very good and above the national average. Progress in academic courses is closer to national averages in a number of subjects. Students report high levels of satisfaction for the courses they follow. The percentage of students who complete their course of study is over ninety per cent.
- The small number of students who enter the sixth form without good grades in either English or mathematics or both are highly motivated and catered for well. Some have already attained the required grades.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114297
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	453388

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	617
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	96
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Bruno Porter
<b>Headteacher</b>	Deborah Merrett
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 March 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01388 527302
<b>Fax number</b>	01388 528173
<b>Email address</b>	info@wolsinghamschool.net

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