

Tanfield School, Specialist College of Science and Engineering

Tanfield Lea Road, Stanley, County Durham DH9 8AY

Inspection dates

5 to 6 February 2019

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Over time, weak and variable standards of teaching, within subjects and across year groups, have led to pupils making inadequate progress.
- Assessment processes do not enable pupils to address misconceptions. On too many occasions, misunderstandings persist. This undermines pupils' progress.
- Standards of writing are highly variable. Too many pupils, particularly boys, do not write as well as they should, and this limits their progress across the curriculum. Catch-up funding has not been used to address weaknesses in literacy swiftly enough.
- In 2017 and 2018, pupils' progress was well-below average in the vast majority of subjects. Although improving, pupils' progress remains weak in too many subjects.
- Despite signs of slight improvement, disadvantaged pupils make weak progress over time and their attainment is poor. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make much weaker progress than their peers.
- Although differences are diminishing in some year groups, boys make weaker progress than girls, and expectations of what pupils, especially boys, can achieve are not high enough.

The school has the following strengths

- In the 18 months since his arrival, the headteacher has taken effective action to improve teaching and leadership. He has a clear vision for improvement that is influencing positive changes in the learning culture.
- Leaders are introducing new routines to improve behaviour and standards of teaching. Classroom environments are becoming more purposeful, although variance in behaviour still exists.
- The new deputy headteacher has worked closely with year managers to improve behaviour and welfare. The last term has seen a marked improvement in attendance and a significant reduction in fixed-term exclusions.
- Leaders are developing a curriculum to better meet the needs of all pupils, building knowledge, skills and understanding to support their aspirations, progress and personal development.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, 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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils' progress and attainment, particularly that of boys, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, improves by making sure that:
 - learning routines are implemented consistently and effectively across all subjects
 - pupils are provided with challenging work that enables them to make strong progress
 - assessment practices are used consistently and effectively to help pupils to make better progress
 - all pupils, particularly boys, are supported to improve the quality of their writing across all subjects.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - urgently addressing remaining weaknesses in the quality of teaching and leadership
 - developing the roles of middle leaders so they can secure rapid improvements in pupils' outcomes in the subjects they are responsible for
 - enhancing teachers' subject expertise to better prepare pupils for new GCSE courses
 - using Year 7 catch-up funding to address gaps in pupils' learning at the earliest opportunity
 - building on recent improvements to ensure that all staff have high expectations for what pupils can achieve.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - improving pupils' behaviour on-site to establish a more orderly environment where all pupils feel safe
 - further reducing instances of fixed-term exclusion
 - developing pupils' confidence as learners to help them to articulate their views and make better progress
 - building on the success of recent actions to improve pupils' attendance and reduce persistent absence.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, there has been a significant decline in pupils' outcomes and a high turnover of staff. Since his arrival 18 months ago, the new headteacher has worked intensively to improve leadership and the quality of teaching. While there are signs that these actions are beginning to improve pupils' progress, they have not made enough of a difference to achieve the significant change required.
- It has taken the headteacher some time to establish a more stable leadership team and, as a result, for improvement plans to start to make a difference. Since the arrival of the new deputy headteacher in September 2018, there has been a substantial reduction in exclusions and a marked improvement in attendance. This shows that the school's capacity for improvement is increasing.
- Year managers are working with senior leaders to address the welfare needs of individual pupils more effectively. However, actions to raise pupils' awareness of welfare issues are at an early stage and are having variable effect.
- The quality of subject leadership is inconsistent. While some aspects of subject leadership are improving, differences persist between subjects and this is slowing the pace of improvement.
- The headteacher is building stronger links with the local community and local primary schools. Increasing numbers of parents are putting their faith in the school, with substantial increases in pupil numbers in Years 7 and 8. However, a significant minority of parents who responded to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire expressed negative attitudes about pupils' behaviour and progress.
- The headteacher is building a more aspirational culture. He and his team want the best for pupils. They are developing a broad and balanced curriculum that is meeting pupils' needs more effectively. Many of the previous gaps in the curriculum are now being filled. Despite this, variability in the quality of teaching is undermining the implementation of the curriculum in too many subjects.
- Leaders have clear plans to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils have developed a sense of social responsibility through their work to support food banks and charities, and in commemorating Remembrance Day. Pupils represent the school in sporting and musical events. Some of the school's work to improve pupils' awareness of different faiths is less developed.
- After a period of heightened staff turnover, there are signs of improving staff morale. In responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, most staff felt well-supported and well-led. However, there remain a small minority of staff who expressed much more negative views of the quality of leadership and behaviour.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are tracking the use of pupil premium funding more assiduously. They are reviewing the pupil premium strategy, monitoring pupils' progress on a regular basis and checking the impact of additional support and interventions. While their actions have not led to a marked improvement in outcomes,

they are ensuring a more consistent focus.

- The headteacher is working with the local authority and other local schools to develop subject expertise and the accuracy of assessment. Leaders and governors now have a much more accurate view of academic standards.
- Leaders have introduced thorough systems to monitor the quality of teaching. Higher standards of accountability for all staff have been established. Weaker teaching is being addressed.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is introducing better strategies to identify pupils' needs and check the effect of support for pupils with SEND. There are signs of improving practice, although these pupils continue to make weaker progress than their peers.
- Leaders are not evaluating the effect of Year 7 catch-up plans closely enough. As a result, these support programmes are not closing gaps in pupils' literacy and numeracy knowledge rapidly enough.

Governance of the school

- Over the past year, the new chair and vice-chair of governors have intensified their actions to hold leaders to account, for example by meeting the headteacher on a weekly basis to review progress against improvement targets.
- Governors have developed effective systems to check school performance. They schedule meetings to take place after periodic assessment so that they can gain direct insight into current pupils' progress. They work with the local authority development partner to further scrutinise performance and challenge underachievement.
- Governors know their school and their community well. Many are parents with children at the school. They share the headteacher's ethos of high aspiration which they believe is gaining traction in the local community, as reflected in the significant increase in pupil numbers in Year 7 and 8.
- Governors check on the progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND to assess how well additional funding is spent. They are aware of the weaker progress and attendance of these pupils. Governors are beginning to use this information to make leaders more accountable. However, these actions have not resulted in a significant diminishing of differences in attendance and progress by these pupils compared with their peers.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders carry out thorough checks to ensure the suitability of adults working on-site. They also ensure that staff and governors receive up-to-date training on a range of safeguarding issues.
- The deputy headteacher and year managers keep a watchful eye on the welfare of pupils. Leaders pursue any concerns over pupils' welfare swiftly and follow these through to ensure that pupils are safe. Leaders document any concerns in a detailed and timely manner.

- Leaders modify teaching and welfare programmes to meet pupils' needs. They have worked with the police to make pupils aware of the dangers of harassment and cyberbullying. Additional work has been carried out to raise pupils' awareness of the hazards posed by knife crime.
- The majority of pupils feel safe in school. However, in discussion with inspectors, some pupils said that they felt intimidated by the behaviour of pupils on corridors and staircases. Leaders have introduced changes which are improving behaviour and are aware that this is still an area that requires further improvement.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Over time, weaknesses in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have resulted in pupils making poor progress from their starting points across a wide range of subjects. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is also weak.
- A combination of high staff turnover and staff absence in recent years has undermined the consistency of teaching and made it difficult for new developments to be implemented securely. This is beginning to improve but the overall quality of teaching remains too variable.
- Teaching has not adapted swiftly enough to prepare pupils for the requirements of new GCSE specifications. As new courses have been introduced, pupils' progress has fallen further behind.
- Pupils' writing, particularly that of boys, is not developed sufficiently. On too many occasions, this limits pupils' ability to communicate their ideas accurately in subjects across the curriculum.
- There is significant variability in pupils' ability to use school assessment processes to improve the quality of their work. In English and modern foreign languages, pupils are using feedback purposefully. However, in mathematics and science, practice is more variable and teachers do not consistently identify and address pupils' misconceptions. While pupils' books show that they are acquiring knowledge, they are not applying this knowledge by solving problems and answering questions on a sufficiently regular basis.
- The headteacher has introduced new strategies to encourage more purposeful reading in class. This is leading to a sharper focus on reading and is encouraging orderly classroom conduct. However, on occasions, whole-class reading holds the most able pupils back when they are ready to move on to greater challenge.
- Leaders are developing pupils' knowledge of key words and vocabulary. In morning and lunchtime meetings, the headteacher and senior teachers show pupils how to build their knowledge of key words and concepts and how to revise for examinations effectively. These initiatives are beginning to make a difference, but they remain at an early stage of development.
- Teachers are beginning to use whole-school approaches to maintain a better focus on learning. For example, pupils are directed to 'track' their teachers to ensure better concentration and focus. In subjects such as English, history and technology, these approaches are improving the quality of teaching. However, practice is inconsistent in other subjects, particularly where staffing is less stable.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Although leaders are doing much to raise pupils' self-esteem and aspirations, a number of pupils lack confidence and are reluctant to articulate their thoughts in class. New initiatives are beginning to develop a more positive learning culture, but these practices remain at an early stage.
- Leaders are introducing strategies to support pupils' social and emotional welfare. While some pupils commented on the positive influences of these strategies, others had a much more mixed view, showing that changes have not fully taken hold.
- Leaders promote messages about the effect of bullying on pupils' welfare. They have worked with the police to raise pupils' awareness of the negative effects of cyberbullying and the harassment this can cause. Leaders and year managers review incidents of bullying in their morning meetings. Incidents of verbal and online bullying do occur, but leaders are taking action to resolve these.
- The deputy headteacher and year managers are particularly mindful of the needs of vulnerable pupils. They track the welfare of these pupils closely and work with external partners to provide additional support. Leaders have clear systems in place to check the progress and attendance of pupils at alternative provision. They take practical action to provide support for disadvantaged pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Leaders have made behaviour a school priority and there are some indications that standards are improving. Higher staff presence and better coordinated management of duty teams have led to improved supervision at breaktimes and lunchtimes. However, a significant minority of pupils expressed concerns over behaviour, particularly that of older pupils at breaktimes and lesson change-over times, which is still too boisterous and unruly.
- A significant proportion of the parents who responded to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire expressed concerns about behaviour. While this may only represent approximately 5% of the overall parent body, it nevertheless shows that a significant minority feel that behaviour is not good enough.
- Senior and middle leaders have worked with pupils and parents to improve behaviour. They have introduced strategies to promote positive and pre-emptive action to resolve behaviour incidents before they escalate. Last year, the numbers of fixed-term exclusions were extremely high. In just a term, new practices have secured an 80% reduction in fixed-term exclusions.
- In lessons, inspectors saw evidence of new behaviour strategies leading to orderly classroom environments. In the majority of lessons, pupils responded to new initiatives to concentrate on teacher instructions and to read and work in more focused ways. Low-level disruption is declining, although there are still instances where this occurs,

particularly in classes affected by frequent staffing changes or absence.

- In recent years, absence has been too high and well-above that seen nationally. Leaders are introducing new targeted approaches to provide better support and challenge for pupils and families. In just one term, these actions have secured a 1% improvement in attendance on the same period last year. Persistent absence is proving more difficult to reduce.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- In 2017 and 2018, pupils' progress was well below average in the overwhelming majority of subjects. Although current progress shows some signs of improvement, pupils continue to make poor progress from their starting points.
- Pupils' progress in English and mathematics has been well below average for two years. Progress in mathematics remains limited as work lacks challenge and misconceptions are not sufficiently addressed. In English, there are signs that improvements in teaching and learning are beginning to raise standards. However, in many cases, the quality of boys' work remains much weaker than that of girls.
- Disadvantaged pupils make weak progress over time. Their overall progress has been well below average for three consecutive years. In 2018, only 4% of disadvantaged pupils achieved strong passes of grade 5 or above in English and mathematics. Leaders and teachers are now tracking the progress of disadvantaged pupils more carefully and their actions are securing improving progress.
- The headteacher is working with his team to introduce whole-school strategies to develop pupils' reading and comprehensions skills. These initiatives require pupils to read in focused ways. However, some of these approaches restrict the progress of the most able pupils who have the facility to read more swiftly. Standards of writing across the curriculum are variable. Many boys demonstrate weaker standards of accuracy and presentation and are less confident in writing at length.
- Leaders are introducing strategies to improve the support for pupils with SEND. However, teachers do not consistently check the effect of this support, with the result that the progress of pupils with SEND is often weak. Some differences are diminishing but significant gaps remain.
- Current progress information indicates that pupils in Year 10 are making improved progress. There are also some signs of improvement at key stage 3. However, work in pupils' books shows that improvements are not secure and overall progress remains fragile.
- The proportion of Year 11 pupils entering education, employment and training has been in line with that seen nationally. However, too many pupils have not achieved the grades in their qualifications to prepare them well for their next steps when leaving school.

School details

Unique reference number	114293
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10059046

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 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	669
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine McGough
Headteacher	Steven Clough
Telephone number	01207 232 881
Website	www.tanfieldschool.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@tanfieldschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 to 10 November 2016

Information about this school

- Tanfield School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average.
- Almost all pupils are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND who access support is average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is above average.
- Since the previous inspections, there have been significant changes to senior leadership. A new headteacher was appointed in June 2017 and a new deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2018. A new chair and vice-chair of the governing body are also in place.
- Since September 2018, the school has been working with the local authority and local

schools to improve the quality of teaching and leadership.

- The school currently uses three alternative providers. These are Delta Independent School, Education Plus and the Gap at Fyndoune Community College.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in a wide range of lessons and classes. Senior leaders joined inspectors for a number of these observations.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders and a mixed group of teachers and year managers.
- Inspectors met with five members of the governing body, including the chair and the vice-chair.
- The inspectors met the education development partner from the local authority.
- The inspectors met groups of pupils and talked to pupils about their learning and experiences during lessons and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes and in the transitions between lessons.
- Inspectors listened to several Year 7 pupils read.
- An inspector held telephone conversations with providers hosting some of the school's pupils who are currently at alternative provision.
- The inspectors carried out an extensive review of work in pupils' books and folders.
- Inspectors looked at the school's action plans, self-evaluation and a range of documents outlining the school's progress in tackling improvement priorities. They also considered arrangements for safeguarding and records relating to attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors took into account the 64 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and the 44 free-text responses from parents. They also considered the 59 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 27 responses to Ofsted's pupils' questionnaire.

Inspection team

Malcolm Kirtley, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sara Crawshaw	Ofsted Inspector
John Downs	Ofsted Inspector
Louise Greatrex	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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