

Northfield School and Sports College

Thames Road, Billingham, County Durham TS22 5EG

Inspection dates 6–7 July 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Northfield School and Sports College has improved substantially since the previous inspection.
- GCSE results were above average in 2015. Accurate predictions for 2016 are higher.
- Good teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in Years 10 and 11, enable pupils to progress well.
- Robust tracking systems enable leaders and teachers to check exactly on the progress that pupils are making.
- There are good arrangements for ensuring pupils' health, safety and welfare. Pupils benefit from effective personal support when they need it.
- Pupils think highly of their school and are proud to belong to it.
- Through excellent photographic displays, it is clear that each pupil's successes are highly valued.
- Pupils take a pride in their appearance and conduct themselves in a mature and sensible manner in lessons and around the school. They are polite, welcoming and helpful.
- The vast majority of parents and carers are positive about the quality of education that the school provides.
- The headteacher, governors and leaders at all levels work effectively to ensure that teaching and pupils' achievement continue to improve.
- Staff morale is outstanding.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a few lessons in Years 7 to 9 the pace of learning is rather slow because teachers do not plan sufficiently well for pupils of differing ability.
- Occasionally, younger pupils become restless in class and waste time.
- The school's least able pupils do not always make good progress.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to practise their speaking skills in modern foreign languages.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the current good teaching to outstanding by:
 - ensuring that work in Years 7 to 9 fully meets the needs of pupils of all abilities
 - increasing pace in a small number of lessons to ensure that pupils do not become restless and waste time
 - ensuring that teaching of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities meets the most effective practice in the school
 - providing pupils with more opportunity to speak in modern foreign languages, to enable them to hold a conversation at ease.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Effective leadership by the headteacher and his senior team has ensured that the school has improved substantially since the previous inspection. Teaching, assessment and the school's GCSE results are all much better than they were two years ago.
- The school has very effective methods of measuring how well it is doing and for setting the agenda for continuously improving the quality of education it provides.
- Leaders have high expectations. They take effective steps to ensure that the quality of pupils' work continues to rise. For example, a very comprehensive system for checking on the amount of progress that pupils are making in lessons ensures that any weaknesses in classroom practice are reduced as quickly as possible. Consequently, pupils' progress in all subjects is good. However, there are still a few lessons in Years 7 to 9 where the pace of learning is too slow.
- The enthusiastic and effective group of middle leaders play their part in ensuring that rates of pupils' progress continue to rise. They also carry out observations of lessons with senior leaders and check the quality of work in books.
- Staff morale is excellent. The whole team works exceptionally well to ensure that pupils have a good opportunity to thrive both personally and academically. There is no room for complacency because leaders ensure that continuous professional development at all levels sets ever higher targets and raises expectations. The splendid photographic displays around the school in the foyer and corridors celebrate success and ensure that pupils all know that they are highly valued as individuals.
- The broad and balanced curriculum is very strong. Rich opportunities to study a wide range of subjects are balanced by the rigour of pursuing challenging academic routes such as separate sciences and modern languages at GCSE. For pupils who prefer practical approaches, engineering and construction augment their GCSE work in English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is embedded effectively into all of the subjects they study and also into the very wide range of extra-curricular activities. It is instrumental in ensuring that they succeed both personally and academically. Pupils have plenty of opportunity to study topics such as life in modern Britain, governance, democracy and the perils of radicalisation. The school is proud of being a Holocaust Beacon School and displays moving messages associated with this topic, for example through an outstanding art display in the main hall.
- A high proportion of pupils pursue the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Active pupil leaders are encouraged to contribute to important spending decisions, help to design school uniform and act as peer mentors to eliminate bullying. Senior pupils have the opportunity to address parents of Year 6 pupils joining the school, answer their questions and put them at ease.
- Equal opportunities have a very high profile. School leaders look carefully at the needs of all groups of pupils and do their best to respond to them. Good use of Year 7 catch-up funding and pupil premium funding ensures that the school's most disadvantaged pupils have every chance to reach their potential. For example, in Year 7, a small group of the school's least able pupils have individual programmes in mathematics, coupled with plenty of adult support to enable them to progress well and close in on expected rates of progress.
- A developing programme for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lifting their rates of progress, but effectiveness of classroom practice in catering for them still varies rather widely.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance of the school is strong. Governors play a highly active role in the school. They visit regularly to check standards, speak to pupils and staff and use the local authority specialists to verify that assessment systems are robust and accurate. They are very aware of improvement priorities and check conscientiously on the effectiveness of pupil premium funding.
 - Governors assist in supporting leaders on issues such as the behaviour of some of the school's most demanding pupils. They provide valuable challenge when appropriate and ensure that performance management arrangements are robust and salary progressions merited.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are effective because there are good systems in place, which members of staff implement consistently. Examples are the good level of adult supervision at breaks and lunchtimes and the very good record-keeping on all safeguarding matters.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching and learning has improved substantially since the previous inspection in response to effective leadership at all levels and staff training.
- Teaching is of consistently good quality in Years 10 and 11 and enables pupils to do well at GCSE. Exceptionally good teaching in drama, history, geography, religious studies and work with computers frequently enables pupils to make really rapid progress.
- There is also much good teaching in Years 7 to 9 but quality does vary. This means that although pupils generally progress well, there are lessons where learning is limited.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide lessons that generally challenge pupils of all abilities. They have high expectations of their pupils in terms of conduct and academic progress. Usually, much is achieved in the time available.
- Typically, teachers manage their classes well, make lesson objectives clear and check to ensure that pupils understand what they are studying and make good progress. Effective questioning of pupils extends their knowledge, makes them think and checks their understanding well.
- A well-organised and improving programme for the least able pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities means that their needs are identified accurately. Much of the teaching they receive really moves their learning on quickly, especially when they are assisted by the skilled classroom assistants. However, there are still a few lessons where teachers are not ensuring that they progress quickly enough.
- The teaching of the school's most able pupils has improved considerably and is now good. Accurate assessment data and evidence from their work completed over time confirm that the most able pupils in Years 10 and 11 are on track to achieve well with the highest grades at GCSE.
- Teachers provide pupils with good opportunities to develop their writing skills in all of the subjects they study.
- The school's robust and accurate tracking system quickly identifies pupils or groups who are not making enough progress, enabling leaders to take action to rectify matters swiftly.
- The marking of pupils' work follows the school policy. It is much better than at the time of the previous inspection and indicates clearly how pupils can improve their work. Some innovative and exceptionally effective assessment in design and technology and art uses computers to demonstrate clearly how pupils can develop their skills further.
- There are a few lessons in Years 7 to 9 where low-level challenging behaviour results from inadequate planning and a slow pace. Occasionally, pupils' learning is restricted because teachers have not planned well enough for pupils of all abilities in their class. In modern languages teachers enable pupils to write well but there are not enough opportunities for them to develop conversation skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils become far more mature and self-assured as they move from Year 7 to Year 11. The school provides them with plenty of opportunity to take responsibility, for example through the peer anti-bullying programme and the school council. Extra-curricular sport helps pupils to develop confidence and enables many to widen horizons by competing at the highest local and national levels.
- Pupils really do value the amount of assistance that teachers and their assistants provide. They know that if they slip behind with their work or need help with discussing personal matters, there is always someone to turn to with confidence. Leaders check carefully to ensure that good welfare arrangements are in place for the pupils who attend the local authority Aspire provision.
- Good levels of supervision when pupils have breaks or lunchtimes mean that they are kept safe because there is always an adult on hand to help should the need arise. Pupils say that they feel perfectly safe in school and that serious bullying is exceptionally rare. They are confident that the school deals with all types of bullying swiftly and point to the achievement of the prestigious Lady Diana Award for anti-bullying work where they take pride in their own contributions as peer supporters for other pupils.
- Pupils confirm that the school teaches them in detail about all potential threats to their welfare such as the internet if used unwisely, drugs, alcohol and radicalisation.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis with a clear code of conduct that all pupils understand and most adhere to fully. Pupils move around the large site safely and sensibly with due regard for the safety of others.
- Behaviour in lessons is generally good and frequently outstanding. Pupils almost always cooperate fully with their teachers and classroom assistants, whom they respect fully.
- Exclusions for unacceptable conduct are falling quickly and have now reached national average levels. Serious disruption in class is exceptionally rare, but there are still a few instances of younger pupils becoming restless and wasting time.
- Older pupils frequently demonstrate sustained concentration for long periods as they prepare for GCSE. Pupils at the Aspire provision respond well to the expectations of their teachers and develop skills related to the careers they wish to pursue.
- Attendance is above average and levels of persistent absence are below average in response to the effective efforts that leaders make to ensure that pupils come to school regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- The school's best ever GCSE results in 2015 were substantially improved compared with those of the previous year. An above-average proportion of pupils gained five GCSE results in the range A* to C, including English and mathematics. Middle-ability pupils did particularly well, but the above-average results masked some underperformance by the school's least and most-able pupils.
- Current progress data shows that the current Year 11 are expected to eclipse the performance of the previous cohort because low, middle and high ability pupils are all on track to do well. Well-founded expectations of the current Year 10 indicate clearly that a further substantial rise is likely.
- Work in lessons and in pupils' books and folders shows that most are making at least good progress in Year 10. In Years 7 to 9 current progress is good overall, but not quite as strong as in Years 10 and 11, where there is a relentless focus on success at GCSE.
- In 2015, the GCSE examination results showed that for disadvantaged pupils, the gap between their performance and that of other pupils in the school was a grade in English and more than a grade in mathematics. Compared with other pupils nationally, the gaps were similar. Disadvantaged pupils' GCSE results were around a full grade lower across all their subjects compared with other pupils in the school.
- The improving picture relating to the current Year 11 shows that these gaps are narrowing substantially but not closing completely. The improvement for disadvantaged pupils is due in part to the effective extra provision associated with the pupil premium funding programme. By the time pupils leave Year 11, they have developed the skills and attributes necessary for the next stage in their education or the world of work.
- Pupils' work is extensive and presented well. Pupils read well and know how to write at length for a variety of audiences by the time they reach Year 11. Some of their writing is particularly sophisticated.
- Where pupils join the school with below-average attainment in English or mathematics, the school provides some very good teaching to enable them to catch up. Small teaching groups mean that they have plenty of individual attention and bespoke programmes to enable them to progress well.
- There is now an effective programme to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Good assessment systems quickly identify ability levels and any gaps in their learning. The progress of this group of pupils is improving overall and in many lessons it is good. Visually impaired pupils are achieving well in response to the school's specialist provision. However, there are still some instances of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities making slow rather than good progress in class.
- Pupils who attend the local authority Aspire provision are making good progress in the development of their personal skills alongside their GCSE work. Several are successful in vocational courses linked to their career aspirations.
- Typically, pupils join Year 7 with attainment in English and mathematics that is broadly average. The school is challenging each cohort to reach above-average results at GCSE. Pupils in all year groups are currently on track to meet these targets.

School details

Unique reference number	111731
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10011977

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,325
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Leslie Wadey
Headteacher	Craig Walker
Telephone number	01642 557 373
Website	northfieldssc.org
Email address	northfield.school@stockton.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 March 2014

Information about this school

- Northfield School and Sports College is much larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups. Very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average.
- There is specialist provision for visually impaired pupils.
- An average proportion of pupils are supported through pupil premium funding. The pupil-premium funding is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- A very small number of pupils attend the local authority Aspire provision full-time for specialist support for their personal needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 lessons including five jointly with senior leaders, and looked at a wide range of pupils' written work, especially in Years 8 and 10.
- They held meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the special needs coordinator, groups of pupils and representatives of the governing body and the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's review of its performance, development planning, records of pupils' progress, safeguarding procedures and incident logs.
- They took account of 90 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), 106 responses to the staff questionnaire and 26 free-text messages from parents.

Inspection team

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