

John Spence Community High School

Preston Road, North Shields, Tyne and Wear NE29 9PU

Inspection dates

29–30 November 2017

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	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils' outcomes were not as strong in 2017 as they have been in the past. The headteacher and senior leaders have addressed the weaknesses in teaching systematically and, consequently, current pupils are making good progress across most subjects.
- Senior leaders have managed a period of substantial change at the school well. They have successfully recruited specialist teachers and leaders with relevant experience. As a result, teaching has improved.
- Governors make a significant contribution to school improvement. They are provided with detailed information about the school's progress, which allows them to challenge leaders effectively.
- Procedures to safeguard pupils are rigorous. Vulnerable pupils are supported very well to engage fully in school life.
- The curriculum is broad and varied. Pupils are guided well onto a range of courses at key stage 4. The school's 'Fit for Life' programme promotes personal development effectively. There is an impressive range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport.
- The school's systems for tracking pupils' progress are thorough and accurate. Leaders and teachers take prompt action to support pupils if they are falling behind.
- Pupils' attendance is above the national average. In the past, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who were regularly absent from school has been high, but it is now reducing.
- In the recent past, disadvantaged pupils have made below-average progress compared to other pupils nationally. Leaders have taken prompt action to raise teachers' expectations and provide effective support for these pupils. Consequently, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is improving.
- Most teachers provide well-planned and engaging learning opportunities for pupils. However, some inconsistencies remain in teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially the most able pupils. The quality of presentation in pupils' books is also variable.
- The leadership of most subjects is good. Newly appointed subject leaders receive high-quality training to develop their leadership skills. They are tackling the remaining weaknesses in teaching and assessment, particularly in mathematics and geography.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is good. Pupils are respectful and supportive of one another. A small number of pupils engage in off-task talking, particularly in key stage 3, when the learning activities are not well matched to their abilities.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and, consequently, pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics and geography, by ensuring that:
 - the gaps in pupils' learning in mathematics are identified and addressed quickly and effectively
 - all teachers use what they know about pupils' abilities to plan appropriately challenging learning activities, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils
 - all teachers have high expectations of the standard of work pupils can produce
 - all teachers challenge any off-task behaviour, particularly by younger pupils.
- Improve leadership and management further by ensuring that:
 - all subject leaders iron out any remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - leaders develop pupils' mathematical skills across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and senior leaders provide strong leadership. They have led the school effectively through a sustained period of change while moving into new school buildings and recruiting specialist staff to replace several teachers who have left or retired recently. They have established a school ethos in which everyone is valued. Relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils, are very positive. Senior staff have also been proactive in identifying potential leaders within the school and developing their skills to take on new roles. Staff are very appreciative of the training and development opportunities provided for them. They use this training to continually improve their practice.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are fully aware of the reasons why, in 2017, Year 11 pupils did not achieve well. Leaders took decisive action to address the weaknesses in teaching, assessment and subject leadership. Leaders' plans for improvement are ambitious, aspirational and well considered. They outline specific actions for improvement based on their detailed analysis of current and past pupils' outcomes. Staff and leaders are very clear about the headteacher's expectations of them and of pupils, and are fully committed to meeting them.
- Leaders regularly analyse pupils' progress in each subject. They identify pupils who need extra support and put intervention in place quickly. The school's systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are robust. Assessments are scrutinised regularly to make sure that they will accurately identify what pupils know and can do. As a result, current pupils in the school are making good progress.
- The local authority provides effective support for the school. Leaders welcome the challenge offered by working collaboratively with other schools within the North Tyneside Learning Partnership. Subject leaders benefit from working with other specialist teachers locally, for example checking that assessments of pupils' progress are accurate.
- The curriculum is carefully planned and reviewed regularly to make sure that it meets pupils' needs and interests. Pupils are guided well to choose a broad and varied range of subjects at key stage 4. These qualifications lead them onto appropriate education or training when they leave school at the end of Year 11. Leaders ensure that the most able pupils follow a challenging curriculum. Increasing numbers are opting to study three separate sciences, with good levels of success.
- The school's 'Fit for Life' programme engages pupils in exploring a comprehensive range of topics. For example, pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a citizen in modern Britain, how to keep themselves healthy and safe and how to work well with others. The programme provides ample opportunity for pupils to listen attentively, consider different viewpoints and lifestyles and form opinions. As a result, pupils' personal development is promoted well.
- Leaders provide a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities for pupils and they encourage as many pupils as possible to participate in these. The school's sports academy is highly valued by the many pupils who take part. Many pupils

participate at a high level in local sporting competitions. Pupils demonstrate the values encouraged by staff and inspired by pupils' participation in sport: teamwork, continuous improvement and fairness. Pupils also said that they value the range of cultural opportunities on offer, including music, drama and the school's film club.

- Leaders ensure that additional funding is used effectively to support pupils' progress and personal development. Leaders evaluate the effect of the school's intervention programmes to check that their actions are making a difference. For example, the additional funding to support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities enables highly trained and effective teaching assistants to provide excellent support for pupils in lessons. As a result, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities achieve well and engage fully across the curriculum.
- Leaders also plan carefully how to use the pupil premium funding and the funding to support Year 7 pupils who need to catch up. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is improving in most year groups and across most subjects. Nevertheless, leaders acknowledge that there is more to do to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to other pupils nationally with the same starting points. Pupils who need to catch up with their reading are very well supported to do so. However, the programme for developing pupils' mathematical skills is less well developed. Recently, senior leaders have appointed specialist staff to support the learning of those pupils who need to catch up in mathematics.
- Subject leaders are enthusiastic and ambitious. They have clearly defined roles. With the guidance of senior leaders, they check the quality of teaching regularly. All subject leaders demonstrate clearly how they are improving the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, although they do so with varying degrees of success. Leaders are aware that there is still some variability in the quality of teaching within departments, particularly in mathematics and geography. They are tackling these inconsistencies systematically and effectively.
- School leaders encourage parents to provide regular feedback so that they can continually improve aspects of school life. A significant number of parents responded to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, and they show a high level of support for the school. A large proportion of parents agree that the school is well led, that their children are making good progress and that their children are safe in school.

Governance of the school

- Governors are well informed about all aspects of the school's performance. Individual governors specialise in areas of school improvement, such as pupils' progress, safeguarding and provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They regularly update the full governing body about the school's strengths and weaknesses so that all governors have an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness.
- Governors ask challenging questions of school leaders and hold them robustly to account for the use of additional funding. For example, they know how the pupil premium funding is used to improve the progress and attendance of disadvantaged pupils.
- Governors make sure that their own training is kept up to date. They are well supported by the local authority's training programme for governors. They also seek out external support to challenge themselves to be highly effective.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to safeguarding pupils. Staff use the school's robust systems for reporting concerns so that pupils are given the support they need.
- The designated safeguarding leaders are very knowledgeable. They are well trained and keep meticulous records. The pastoral team communicates very well with parents, staff and a wide range of external agencies. The school has well-developed procedures for involving pupils, where appropriate, in making decisions about their care and welfare.
- School records of pre-employment checks are comprehensive and well kept.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils make strong progress in science, history and physical education because they experience consistently high-quality teaching. In these subjects, teachers are very skilled in planning sequences of lessons which build on pupils' prior knowledge. Teachers also engage pupils well in exploring new topics and developing subject-specific language. Pupils are well prepared for examinations in these subjects.
- Teachers' assessments are accurate. In most cases, teachers' feedback provides pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work. Feedback is used particularly well in English, history, the arts and technology to encourage pupils to reflect on and improve their learning. Pupils develop their writing skills well in, for example, English and history.
- Pupils value the support that teachers and other adults provide for them. During lessons, teachers and teaching assistants circulate well to intervene with individual pupils who find the work difficult. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported very effectively, both in lessons and during specialist literacy sessions. As a result, they make good progress across the curriculum.
- Leaders have established consistent routines across the curriculum which enable lessons to start promptly. Pupils arrive to lessons on time and are well equipped. The 'bell activities' provided by teachers engage pupils quickly at the beginning of lessons so that learning time is not lost. Most teachers plan well-structured lessons which build up pupils' skills and subject knowledge. As a result, pupils understand the school's routines and most respond positively to these expectations.
- Many teachers use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding. Teachers re-explain tasks and learning methods where necessary and pupils are encouraged to ask for help. Skilful questioning helps pupils to explore their ideas in more depth and to justify their thinking or opinions. On occasions, pupils lack confidence and rely too heavily on their teacher's support, rather than seeking solutions for themselves from the resources available to them.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. Most teachers design interesting lessons which are pitched at the right level for pupils to make good progress. However, a small number of teachers do not take sufficient account of pupils' starting points. Their expectations of what pupils can do are too low, especially for the most able pupils. This is particularly the case in mathematics and geography, and occasionally in other

subjects.

- Due to a legacy of weak teaching in mathematics, many pupils have gaps in their skills and understanding, particularly at key stage 3. In addition, pupils' mathematical skills are not well developed across the curriculum. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are now making faster progress due to improved teaching and subject leadership. Large numbers of pupils attend after-school revision sessions to catch up and prepare for examinations. However, leaders know that there is more to do to ensure that all pupils make good progress in mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school's values are promoted consistently through the sports academy ethos and through the school's work with the local community. The values of respect, fairness and teamwork contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils are encouraged to reflect on other people's experiences, such as refugees and families who have experienced conflict or debt. When debating topics, pupils demonstrate responsible attitudes, respect for each other's ideas and empathy for others.
- The school provides a comprehensive programme to teach pupils how to keep themselves safe, through regular assemblies and the 'Fit for Life' programme. This includes how to stay safe online and the 'Prevent' duty, which aims to keep pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism. Staff are also diligent in teaching pupils the importance of safe working practice, for example in science and technology.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. There is a varied programme of careers guidance for pupils in all year groups, which is well led. A rich variety of activities are organised for pupils to explore different careers and develop the skills needed in the workplace. Visitors from a variety of local organisations are a regular feature of school assemblies. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of how different careers require different skills and qualifications. School leaders also work effectively with local education providers and employers to ensure that pupils make a smooth transition into further education or training when they leave school.
- Pupils show a thorough understanding of the different kinds of bullying and what to do if they have any concerns. The school's peer mentoring programme helps pupils who experience any forms of bullying. Systems for dealing with any incidents of bullying are used well by the pastoral team. Pupils said that bullying is rare and they are confident that it is dealt with quickly by school staff.
- The small number of pupils who attend alternative provision off site benefit from work-based learning which motivates them to improve their behaviour in school. Leaders' detailed records show that, during key stage 4, most of this group of pupils have improved their attendance and/or behaviour. Health and safety checks are carried out meticulously and pupils are kept safe. Staff escort them to their work placements in the school minibuses and visit them regularly to check on their progress. They are well supported to make the transition into employment, further education or training.

- Most pupils show resilience when working independently and they are willing to ask for help when they do not understand new concepts or instructions. However, some pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop the confidence to contribute effectively in lessons and they rely too heavily on support from teachers.
- Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and a pride in their work. The school's assessment policy provides pupils with regular opportunities to revisit their work and make improvements. Most pupils do this well. However, the quality of work and presentation in pupils' books is variable within subjects. Some teachers do not set high enough expectations for pupils, particularly in mathematics and geography, while others challenge any poor presentation routinely.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is calm and orderly. They show high levels of respect for each other and towards visitors. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Pupils know that staff want them to achieve well. Pupils are friendly and show a high level of respect for their school environment.
- In lessons, pupils' attitudes to learning are usually good. Most pupils try hard and are willing to make positive contributions to discussions. They collaborate well with each other in groups. Most pupils follow the school's routines and expectations. Occasionally, and particularly in key stage 3, a small number of pupils engage in off-task talking, which slows down the pace of their learning. This is usually when the work set is not challenging enough or when the teacher does not use the school's behaviour policy effectively enough.
- Pupils are punctual to school and to lessons. Overall, attendance is above average. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and understand the importance of attending regularly. In the last two years, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are regularly absent from school has been high, but is now reducing. This is due to the persistence of school leaders and the school's welfare officer, who work closely with this small number of pupils and their families.
- School leaders work hard to be inclusive and to improve the behaviour of the more challenging pupils. In the recent past, fixed-term exclusions have been higher than the national average. However, incidents of poor behaviour have reduced due to the range of interventions in place and the positive relationships being developed between staff and pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- At the time of the last inspection, pupils in the school made progress which was well above average across the curriculum, and outcomes were judged to be outstanding. Provisional performance information for 2017 shows that there was a 'dip' in the overall progress of pupils in last year's Year 11, including for disadvantaged pupils, particularly in English and mathematics. Leaders are fully aware of the factors which led to this weaker progress and took decisive action to address those weaknesses quickly. Consequently, current pupils in the school are now making good progress from their

starting points.

- Over time, pupils' progress in science has been consistently strong. This is due to high-quality teaching in this subject and the effectiveness of pupils' examination preparation. Pupils' outcomes in physical education have also been strong due to high-quality coaching and high levels of pupil participation. In history, pupils achieve well because teachers use regular and rigorous assessment to improve pupils' skills.
- Leaders' close tracking of pupils' progress identifies any pupil who is falling behind in a subject and intervention is quickly put in place. Teachers' predictions show that current pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, are making progress which is much closer to their aspirational targets than last year's Year 11. Teachers' assessments have been accurate in the past. The work in pupils' books also shows that pupils are being prepared well for their examinations. The most able pupils are being challenged to achieve the highest grades.
- In English, current pupils are making consistently good progress across key stages 3 and 4 because sequences of learning are well planned to build on pupils' prior learning. Pupils are well supported to develop their writing skills. They also show interest in the books they are reading independently and in class. Pupils in Year 7 who need to catch up make good progress in their reading as the result of well-chosen literacy intervention.
- In languages, the arts and design and technology, current pupils are also making good progress. This is due to improved practice in teaching and assessment. Pupils show good levels of engagement in these subjects and understand what they need to do to achieve well.
- In mathematics, pupils are also making better progress than in the past, due to better teaching and subject leadership. However, pupils still have gaps in their basic skills which need to be addressed systematically before they can tackle more demanding topics. Teachers have recognised that pupils' problem-solving skills are underdeveloped and have begun to address this weakness also.
- Pupils' progress in geography is inconsistent because the quality of teaching is variable. Not all teachers follow the school's assessment policy to ensure that pupils know how to improve their work. Some teachers' expectations are too low. These weaknesses are being addressed effectively by senior leaders.

School details

Unique reference number	108644
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	10037202

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 comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	827
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Adam Langman
Headteacher	Mr Jim Stephenson
Telephone number	0191 296 1432
Website	www.johnspence.org.uk
Email address	office@johnspence.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 October 2011

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- John Spence Community High School moved into new premises during the academic year 2016/17. The building project is nearing completion. There has been a sustained period of change in staffing over recent years.
- The school works collaboratively with other schools in the North Tyneside Learning Partnership to check that their assessments are accurate.
- The school operates a sports academy on site. The curriculum is adapted to enable talented and interested pupils to work with specialist sports coaches. The school's ethos of teamwork, sportsmanship and respect for others is evident throughout the school.

- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have support for SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above average. The school has resourced provision for 10 pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. These pupils spend most of the time in mainstream lessons, supported by teaching assistants.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium is above average.
- A small number of pupils in key stage 4 are educated off site in alternative provision commissioned by North Tyneside local authority. In collaboration with Southlands School, a school for children who have moderate learning difficulties or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, these pupils access a range of work-related courses, part time, and attend John Spence Community High School for most of their curriculum.
- In 2016, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 34 lessons across subjects in both key stages and in five tutorial sessions. Some were observed jointly with senior leaders. In addition to looking at pupils' books in lesson observations, inspectors undertook a separate scrutiny of books. Inspectors also undertook a learning walk with leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and governors. Inspectors also met with a group of teachers and with pupils from key stages 3 and 4.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, the school's quality assurance, monitoring and assessment records, minutes of governing body meetings and case studies of vulnerable pupils who receive additional support. Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding procedures and records relating to behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered 387 responses received from parents to Ofsted's survey. They considered the views expressed by several pupils during lessons and social times. Inspectors also listened to pupils reading.

Inspection team

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