

Benfield School

Benfield Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE6 4NU

Inspection dates 6–7 May 2015

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| 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.

- Benfield is a good school that has improved considerably since its previous inspection.
- Achievement is good and students make better progress. Behaviour is good. Attendance has risen considerably. School leaders are effective in shaping and directing the work of the school.
- The effectiveness of the sixth form is good which reflects the quality of outcomes, teaching and organisation.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is exemplary. As a result, all groups of students feel extremely safe.
- The progress made by all groups of students currently on roll is good. This includes the most able students, those who are disadvantaged and those students who are disabled or have special educational needs.
- Students' current attainment is in line with that found nationally, with many working at higher levels than previously. The percentage of students on track to gain five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, is substantially higher than previously.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are enthusiastic and have high expectations of the students. Students rise well to challenges and, as a result, achieve well.
- Students who have additional needs are supported very well in lessons and make good gains in their learning.
- Senior leaders and governors work very well together. They have a shared vision for the school and have been very successful in bringing about improvements, especially in teaching and achievement.
- Staff are very positive about all aspects of the school and appreciate the help that leaders have given to improve the quality of teaching.
- Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students are well prepared for the future, including the next stage in their education and for life in modern Britain.
- Students are extremely positive about their school and describe it as one where 'the teachers are always there for you'.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always use information about what students can and cannot do when planning lessons. In consequence, tasks do not always match students' ability and they do not consistently achieve as well as they might do.
- Marking is not of a consistently high quality in the way it helps students to improve their work.
- Not all leaders in charge of subjects are effective. They do not always use all of the available information to make decisions about improving teaching and learning in their departments.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in all year groups in a wide variety of subjects across the school, but with a focus on areas that had been less strong in the past. Two lessons were observed jointly, one with the headteacher and one with the deputy headteacher.
- The inspectors examined information from the school about current students' progress. They also looked at work over the whole year in students' books.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other leaders, including some in charge of subjects.
- The inspectors met seven governors, including the Chair, and vice-chair, of the Governing Body.
- Several meetings were held with students. In addition, inspectors took many opportunities to talk with students in classes and around the school.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection, the school's development plans, minutes of the governing body's meeting and external views of the school.
- The inspectors examined in detail records of attendance, including those relating to groups of students whose attendance had been below average in the past. They examined records relating to behaviour as well as those relating to the quality of teaching and the performance of staff.
- The inspectors took into account the 41 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and also information from the school relating to parental questionnaires from the past three years. Inspectors also took account of the 45 responses from members of staff to their questionnaire.

Inspection team

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Alison Thomson, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Christine Durand | Additional Inspector |
| Barbara Waugh | Additional Inspector |
| Frank Cain | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and the proportion whose first language is believed not to be English is lower than average.
- The proportion of students who are disadvantaged, and therefore supported by the pupil premium, is much higher than the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students who are disabled and those who have special educational needs is much higher than the national average.
- The school has an additionally resourced provision, The Cherrywood Centre, for young people with social communication difficulties or autistic spectrum disorder. It also has an additionally resourced centre for young people with a physical or medical disability.
- A very small number of students who have behavioural, social or emotional needs have been educated full-time at alternative provision, for example at Northumbria Youth Action Motor Vehicle Unit.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school has been supported by several nearby schools and by a National Leader in Education from Whitley Bay High School.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been have been considerable changes in staffing, including some at senior and middle leadership level.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching and progress for all students, including those in the sixth form, by:
 - using information more effectively about what students can and cannot do when planning lessons
 - further improving the quality of guidance students receive about how to improve their work and ensuring they have sufficient opportunities to respond to it.
- Further improve leadership and management by:
 - making certain that all subject leaders make better use of information about students' progress and teachers' performance to identify the key priorities that will raise achievement.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The vision and determination of the governors, the headteacher and the deputy headteacher to address the areas for improvement from the previous inspection have brought about substantial improvements in teaching, achievement, and attendance and in leadership and management.
- There have been significant changes in staffing, some at senior and middle leadership level. These changes in staffing have been managed well.
- The headteacher has been fully supported by his senior leaders, governors and members of staff. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the work of the school. They have clearly identified the priorities for improvement and taken decisive action to address these. This has been helped effectively by the work of the local authority, which has brokered assistance from nearby outstanding schools, including that from a national leader in education from Whitley Bay High School.
- The leadership and management of teaching and learning are robust. Teachers have improved the quality of their teaching through help that has been tailored to their individual needs. Teachers have worked well together to improve their practice. This has resulted in a significant rise in the progress and attainment of all groups of students, which is accelerating even more this academic year.
- The staff questionnaires revealed just how supportive the staff are of the school and just how much they appreciate the help and guidance they receive.
- Systems for checking how well students are achieving are thorough. Any student who is in danger of underachieving is quickly identified and strategies put in place to address this. However, at times, some teachers do not use this information to match work closely to students' abilities and this progress slows.
- Leaders who are in charge of subjects are helping to bring about improvements. In many subjects, including mathematics and English, these leaders are most effective and their plans are clearly focused on the key areas that need improving. This practice is not as evident in some other subjects where leaders are less effective because they do not use information provided to identify areas that need further improvement.
- The school is very inclusive and it works well to promote equality of opportunity, tackle discrimination and to foster good relationships. Additional funding, including the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up money, has been used successfully to boost students' performance. As a result, gaps between the performances of different groups are closing significantly.
- Provision and careers guidance for students, including those in the additionally resourced centre and additionally resourced provision, is highly effective and enables them, like all students, to move on to further and higher education, training or employment.
- Safeguarding procedures meets statutory requirements. They are effective in ensuring all students are cared for extremely well, particularly those who are most vulnerable. Risk assessments for visits and child protection are exemplary. As a result, all groups of students feel very safe.
- The curriculum is constantly reviewed and modified to meets students' needs. For example, high profile areas such as textiles have gained the interest of girls and contributed to their much-improved attendance. Spiritual, social, moral and cultural provision is very strong and prepares students well for life in modern Britain. Students take part in many activities, such as Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign. Sport and the arts are both strong.
- The school monitors closely the achievement, attendance, behaviour and safety of the students who attend alternative provision. This is done by liaising with the alternative providers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is a real asset to the school. Governors have a very accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and hold it to account very effectively. The governing body is proactive in managing the school's budget, including that for disadvantaged students and its members are aware of the good impact that this is having. Governors are also very knowledgeable in understanding data about students' performance and comparing this with other schools. They are fully informed about the quality of teaching and the setting of targets to raise performance. Governors have ensured that weaknesses in teaching have not been rewarded. They are reflective about their own performance and continually seek to improve it, as well as that of the school.

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

- The behaviour of students is good. Students behave well in lessons and also in and around the school. They are polite, hold doors open, and are eager to engage in conversation with adults. The school is virtually litter-free and there is no graffiti.
- Students' attitudes to learning are very positive and they take a pride in their work and its presentation in their books. This is true across all subjects and in all year groups. In many lessons, such as in English, textiles and physical education, students show a thirst for knowledge and understanding and a love of learning.
- Relationships in lesson are good. The vast majority of students show respect for their teachers and for each other. They work well collaboratively in lessons and comment sensitively on how the work of others could be improved.
- Attendance has been an issue in the past, but it has improved significantly for all groups, including those groups where it has been well below that found nationally in the past. It is now broadly average. The school tackled persistent absence of some girls by altering the curriculum to match their needs and interests better. They now realise much better the importance of education.
- Most parents agree that the school helps students to behave well. Staff also agree that students behave well. Older students say that behaviour has improved greatly over their time in school and for the past few years has been good. They welcome the incentives for good behaviour and believe that sanctions are fair.
- Reports indicate that the behaviour of students who attend alternative provision is good.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Keeping young people safe is a high priority and child protection procedures are exemplary. Adults know their students and look after them, especially the most vulnerable students, extremely well. Students say that there are adults they feel they can go and talk to. As a result, all groups of students in the school feel very safe.
- Teachers place considerable stress on the importance of safety in lessons. The inspectors observed students working safely in practical lessons.
- Students are extremely knowledgeable about the different forms of bullying, including homophobic and racist bullying. The school uses outside agencies very successfully to supplement the way it informs students about bullying and prejudice. Students say that 'bullying doesn't happen here', but when people fall out, the school deals with it quickly and effectively.
- Students are very aware of issues around sexual exploitation and of e-safety through events such as a cyber-bullying day.
- The school council works well with senior leaders to promote safety and the school consulted them in the awarding of pride points for good attendance and behaviour.
- Students have balanced views about social and moral issues and they look after students who are disabled or who have special educational needs well, for example through their roles as Autism Ambassadors.
- Reports indicate that students who attend alternative provision feel very safe.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good and leads to good progress for all groups of students across the school. Some teaching results in outstanding progress. Teaching in mathematics is effective and has resulted in consistently good achievement for some time. Similarly, teaching in English has improved substantially over this academic year resulting in a rapid rise in attainment and progress.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this to support learning well. They are enthusiastic and use some innovative techniques that enthuse students. For example, the use of tweets in a Year 11 English lesson to share learning resulted in students making outstanding progress in their knowledge and understanding of how to analyse lyrics and poems.
- Relationships are very positive and students want to come to school and learn. This is illustrated well in students' significantly improved attendance and in their eagerness to come to additional revision sessions at lunchtimes and after school.
- Teachers generally provide work that stretches students and this has resulted in the improved progress of the most able students. Occasionally, however, information about what students can and cannot do is not

used well enough to plan lessons. As a result, tasks are not always set at the correct level and progress sometimes slows.

- Students who are disabled or who have special educational needs are taught very well. Teaching assistants support students effectively in class or in small groups. They are skilled at questioning to allow students to gain in confidence to undertake tasks independently. This is especially true of the students in the additionally resourced centre and additionally resourced provision.
- The school has a comprehensive marking policy and the quality and accuracy of marking has improved. Some marking is excellent in the way it informs students how they can improve their work, but it is not all of such high quality in informing next steps or in checking students' responses to feedback. Consequently, progress at times is not as good as it might be.
- Effective teaching is successfully tackling the low literacy and numeracy skills that some students have when they enter. This is done through one-to-one or small group sessions that sometimes involve older students working with those weaker students. Skills in mathematics are embedded well into other subjects, such as science. Teachers encourage correct skills in writing in many subjects as well as providing opportunities for reading, as in researching information.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted successfully in many lessons and tutor sessions. Election Day fell during the inspection and students were observed discussing the relative merits of the different political parties' policies on immigration. This is also an example of how the school prepares students for life in modern Britain.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students achieve well. Many students enter in Year 7 with attainment that is well below average. In many subjects they leave with attainment that is in line with that found nationally or closely approaching this.
- Progress has improved over the years and even more so this year. The progress of students currently in school is good. Inspection evidence from observations and work scrutiny agree with the school's view that achievement is good.
- Published data show that the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics fell in 2014. This was due in part to the course taken by some Year 11 students in English not being eligible for inclusion in national statistics. This year, the percentage of students attaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics is predicted to increase substantially and to be in line with national figures.
- Progress in many subjects has been rising steadily since the previous inspection. In 2014, progress in mathematics was significantly above average. Published data for progress in English indicated only a slight improvement compared to the previous year. However, progress in English this year compares very favourably with that found nationally.
- The progress of the most able students has improved and is good. Although on occasions work is not fully challenging overall. However, students have higher expectations and teachers motivate them to do well by promoting a 'can do' attitude.
- Students who are disadvantaged make good progress, broadly in line with other students in school and nationally. Published data for 2014 show that the progress of disadvantaged students in school in mathematics was in line with their peers and above that for other students nationally. It also shows that disadvantaged students did not progress as well as their peers or other students nationally in English. However, there has been a big improvement in English and comparisons now are much more favourable.
- Published data shows that gaps in the standards attained between disadvantaged students and their peers have closed substantially. When compared to other students in school, disadvantaged students were half a GCSE grade behind in both English and in mathematics in 2014. Compared to other students nationally, disadvantaged students in school attained half a grade lower in mathematics and one grade lower in English.
- The achievement of students who are disabled and those who have special educational needs is consistently good. This includes the students who are in the additionally resourced centre and the additionally resourced provision. Many of those students have significant needs, but they are integrated into the main school wherever possible. Teaching assistants work very well with teachers to make work accessible and enjoyable for the students.
- The school uses Year 7 catch-up money well to enhance the skills of students who need additional help with their literacy and numeracy. This is having a good impact on their progress. Reading has a high profile in school. Each teacher has details of the book they are currently reading posted on their classroom

door. The inspectors listened to students read and also observed them reading in class. The enjoyment of reading was very apparent.

- The school checks regularly on the progress of the very few students who attend alternative provision. Those students grow in confidence and generally make good progress.
- No students are entered early for examinations.
- Students are being prepared increasingly well for the next stage in their education, training or employment. Literacy, numeracy and communication technology are integrated well into many lessons. Communication, in particular, is a key strength. The inspectors saw students confidently presenting material to the whole class and discussing with their peers ways to achieve even more highly.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Attainment in the sixth form meets the 16 to 19 interim minimum standards specified by the Department of Education. The majority of students who entered the sixth form without grade C in GCSE English or without grade C in mathematics improve their grade or gain an equivalent qualification.
- Attainment and progress in the sixth form have improved since the previous inspection and are continuing to improve this year. Although attainment remains below average, this reflects the students' well-below average attainment on entry. Students, including the most able students, disadvantaged students and those who are disabled and those who have special educational needs, generally make good progress. Previous weaknesses at AS level have been overcome and progress there is significantly above that found nationally.
- Consistently good teaching makes a strong contribution to students' learning and the development of their higher-level skills. This is seen, for example, in the professional quality of Year 12 art and design coursework or in the rigorous analysis of past examination papers in Year 13 mathematics. As in the main school, occasionally there are weaknesses in matching the work well enough to the students' ability and in the quality of feedback in helping students to improve their work. Consequently, this slows down progress in some lessons.
- Retention rates are strong and attendance, while below average, is rising. The students are very positive about the advice and guidance they receive. Courses are matched increasingly well to their interests and there is a move to widen the range of courses on offer to them. A significant number of students go on to higher education and this number is set to rise even higher this year.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is good and the promotion of their safety is outstanding. Students in the sixth form are well supported and looked after. They are increasingly good role models for younger students. Many sixth formers take on wider responsibilities, such as working on the Edge programme helping to develop key skills, such as resilience and initiative with Year 7 and 8 students.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are good and have led to improvements in achievement and students' personal development. Currently, however, as in the main school, the role of subject leaders is not always fully developed in some subjects to ensure precision about aspects to improve.

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

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| Unique reference number | 108526 |
| Local authority | Newcastle upon Tyne |
| Inspection number | 462237 |

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

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|---|---------------------------------|
| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| 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 | 595 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 105 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Elizabeth Bohill |
| Headteacher | Neil Walker |
| Date of previous school inspection | 8 May 2013 |
| Telephone number | 0191 265 6091 |
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