

# Hetton School

North Road, Hetton-le-Hole, Houghton le Spring, Tyne and Wear DH5 9JZ

## Inspection dates

16–17 January 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Standards of achievement have declined sharply since the school was last inspected. In particular, pupils have made significantly less progress in a broad range of subjects, including English and mathematics, than seen nationally.
- Until recently, leaders had an overly generous view of the school's performance. Consequently they did not act to reverse the decline in standards.
- The quality of teaching is variable. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations and do not challenge pupils to think deeply or complete work to a high enough standard.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities do not make as much progress as pupils with similar starting points nationally.
- School plans for driving improvement are overly complicated and not sharply focused enough on the key priorities.
- The poor behaviour of some pupils in a small number of lessons is preventing the majority from making better progress.

### The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed headteacher and his newly formed senior leadership team, together with the restructured governing body, now have a very honest understanding of the school's recent poor performance. They have set a new strategic direction for the school.
- The headteacher, governors and other leaders are determined to turn the school around. There are emerging signs that things have started to head in the right direction.
- The new assessment system enables a more accurate measure of how well pupils are doing. It also supports senior leaders in holding other leaders and teachers to account.
- Pupils are proud of their school and its caring, tolerant ethos.
- The quality of leadership and teaching in the local authority resource provision for pupils who have speech and language difficulties enables pupils to make strong progress.

## Full report

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

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching and learning so that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or who have SEN and/or disabilities, make good progress and achieve standards in line with pupils nationally by:
  - making sure that teachers use the information about pupils' starting points to plan lessons which stretch and challenge them
  - sharing the pockets of good practice across subject teams in order to establish a greater level of consistency in expectation and aspiration
  - ensuring that all leaders focus their quality assurance checks on the progress pupils are making
  - ensuring that actions planned to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils are rigorously evaluated.
- Improve the quality and consistency of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that plans for improvement focus on the most pressing priorities
  - monitoring more carefully the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and providing better support where it is required.
- Ensure that behaviour is consistently good by:
  - ensuring that all members of staff apply the school's behaviour policy
  - leaders taking swift action to identify and eliminate instances of low-level disruption
  - strategically analysing and acting upon attendance information.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.
- An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The quality of the education has declined since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is variable and, as a result, pupils have not made the progress they should in recent years.
- The quality of leadership across the school is variable. There are weaknesses in the senior leadership responsibility of attendance and provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, which means that these aspects of the school's improvement are not as effective as they should be.
- Plans for improvement are overloaded with too many priorities and points of action. As a result leaders are distracted by the less urgent targets and are not focused sharply enough on the challenges at the heart of the school's weaknesses. Consequently, the pace of improvement is not yet as brisk as it needs to be.
- The effectiveness of middle leadership is inconsistent. Some middle leaders understand the urgent need to improve teaching, and are embracing the responsibility. Others are not. The headteacher is using support and challenge with these colleagues. Performance management targets are agreed with the headteacher and are now closely tied to pupil progress. This is starting to make a difference. Training for teachers is now more tightly focused on aspects which will make a difference to pupil achievement.
- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching have focused too much on whether teachers comply with policies and not enough on whether pupils are making good progress. This means that their own monitoring data is giving leaders an inaccurate picture of the impact of teaching on pupils' progress.
- The impact of the pupil premium funding and the Year 7 catch-up funding shows that eligible pupils are beginning to do better. However, plans are not yet sufficiently detailed or focused enough to accelerate the progress of these pupils further. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities still do not make as much progress as other pupils in school. Leaders do not have a strategic overview of the use of SEN funding and the impact of the various strategies used in school. Teachers do not make enough use of the SEN 'pupil passport' information in their planning.
- The recently appointed headteacher has an honest recognition of the school's weak performance in recent years. He is working with determination to make things better and, together with the governors, is steering the school in a purposeful direction. As a result, a more ambitious culture is emerging at the school. While there are early signs of improvement, he is the first to acknowledge that the school's performance is not where it should be.
- The recently formed senior leadership team is energetic, capable and up for the challenge of turning the school around. These leaders are beginning to have a positive impact on the progress of pupils. A well-thought-out and manageable system for tracking pupil progress has been introduced, which provides leaders and teachers with a realistic and accurate picture of how pupils are doing. Leaders have taken steps to strengthen the reliability of the assessments which are used to measure pupil progress.

As a result, leaders have information which is more trustworthy and useful than in the past. This is enabling them to hold teachers more tightly to account for pupil progress.

- Parents and carers are broadly supportive of the school and its new leadership. They feel that their children are well cared for and supported. A few parents have been frustrated with the school's communication, support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, pupil behaviour and how the school deals with bullying.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors are honest about the school's recent performance. They recognise that outcomes at the school have not been good enough for some time.
- Governors have been too accepting of an inaccurate and misleadingly rosy picture of the school. They have been too ready to accept what they described as the 'flowered up' information they were receiving from school leaders. They failed to be sufficiently curious or probing about why their pupils were making significantly less progress in many subjects than other pupils nationally. In part, this was because they focused too much on pupils' attainment of standards in subjects which portrayed an improving picture, rather than on the progress they made which showed a year-on-year performance in the bottom 10% of schools.
- The support and challenge provided by the local authority has not been effective in holding leaders to account for the school's habitual failure in recent years. Those charged with this responsibility have too easily accepted the school's own inaccurate analysis of how it is doing.
- Governors now accept that things have to change and have started to be sharper and more demanding in the way they hold leaders to account. Minutes from governors' meetings following the release of national performance measure information shows that they are now asking more rigorous and challenging questions of leaders. They understand that their focus is on the quality of education pupils receive.
- The governing body has recently undertaken a restructure with new members joining, bringing additional and appropriate skills. They are now in a much stronger position to set the strategic direction of the school and to work with the headteacher and other leaders in improving pupils' progress.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is an ongoing culture of vigilance at the school, led by the leader responsible for the processes which keep children safe. Record keeping is meticulous and there is effective joint work with parents and external partners, including the two off-site alternative provisions used by the school. The senior leader for safeguarding is tenacious in following up any concerns.
- Processes for the recruitment and the checking of the suitability of staff to work with children meet statutory requirements. Staff across the school are trained in the signs of abuse to look out for, and know what to do should they be concerned.
- Pupils report that they feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are variable and often too low, given pupils' generally average or above-average ability when they join the school. This is the case both within and between subjects. In too many lessons, teaching lacks challenge and pace. Pupils sometimes do not have to think very hard or deeply. As a result, they too often switch off and become bored.
- In some lessons, pupils are not clear what they should learn and teachers do not check that pupils have grasped the new learning before moving on. This means that sometimes pupils struggle to articulate their thoughts in class. The quality of their written work is generally sound, but progress in the development of understanding and skills is slow.
- The quality of teachers' planning is variable. Some teachers do not make good enough use of assessment information and therefore do not tailor work to meet the needs of pupils with different starting points. Consequently, the work provided often lacks challenge, especially for the most able pupils. Some teachers' planning enables pupils to make quicker and more sustained progress. This is because they make effective use of pupil progress data made available to them by the school leadership.
- Teaching activities sometimes limit pupils' ability to develop basic skills, such as extended writing or problem-solving. Therefore, pupils are not accessing challenging activities, which is hindering progress.
- Homework is not used consistently. It is not effective in consolidating pupils' learning, or in extending their understanding by making them think more deeply.
- Teachers' use of questioning is variable. In some lessons, it is effective in checking how well pupils have grasped the learning and is used successfully to further extend their understanding. In other lessons, it does not. Opportunities are often missed to challenge pupils to explain what they have learned or to reach for new understanding.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally positive. The majority want to do well and are eager to learn. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their learning in a number of subject areas.
- In some lessons, pupils show strong subject knowledge and a willingness to improve their work. In Year 7 English, for example, pupils respond well to demanding work about using more complex language to build tension. In Year 10 science, pupils make use of the teacher's support in order to improve.
- The school hosts a local authority resource provision for pupils who have speech and language difficulties. Currently, seven pupils access this provision. The teaching of this group of pupils is strong and progress is evident. The good-quality teaching enables these pupils to access the mainstream curriculum when appropriate, such as mathematics and media studies.

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel very well cared for by staff in the school. They know that there are adults they can go to should they be worried about anything and that problems get sorted out.
- Pupils reported that bullying is rare but that when it does happen the staff deal with it effectively. The school keeps detailed records of different types of bullying so that instances are monitored and acted on swiftly. The school takes its responsibilities towards bullying seriously, such as working to achieve the local authority's gold anti-bullying charter mark.
- The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in the school's tolerant and respectful ethos. Pupils speak strongly about the 'zero tolerance' of discriminatory language or attitudes. They speak highly of the example set by older pupils, especially the head boy and head girl. The school's inclusive and community-minded values are further strengthened by the many opportunities for pupils to work together and participate in wider activities. These include sport, overseas visits and community outreach projects such as support for the elderly.
- Until recently, the careers guidance provided for pupils was not sufficiently impartial and meant that too few pupils progressed to a next step destination which was sufficiently aspirational for them. This has changed. Pupils are provided with a wider range of possible providers, including those suitable for pupils wanting to pursue an academic programme and those preferring to follow an apprenticeship or vocational route.
- Leaders have introduced a new rewards system, which recognises pupils' resilience and perseverance. This is beginning to develop stronger attitudes to learning among pupils.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- While instances of poor behaviour are not widespread or common, neither are they rare. Pupils reported ongoing disruption of some lessons, as did a few parents and staff. This is particularly the case in lower sets. On occasion, disruption holds up the learning for significant amounts of time. Low expectations and poorly planned lessons contribute to this.
- Not all staff are using the school's behaviour management system effectively. Pupils report the variability in teachers' skills in dealing with low-level disruption. Leaders have recognised this and provided training for staff. However, leaders are not systematically monitoring patterns of behaviour in lessons. As a result, they are not tackling the ongoing and repeated instances of low-level disruption.
- The rates of attendance are improving and fewer pupils now miss school regularly. This is partly due to the actions taken on the ground to get pupils into school. However,

leaders do not routinely and systematically analyse attendance information. This means they are not as sharp as they should be about the attendance patterns of different groups of pupils and as a result they do not intervene quickly enough.

- Pupils' conduct around the school is orderly and calm. They are polite to visitors and are enthusiastic about, and proud of, their school.
- The school makes use of two alternative providers for supporting a small number of disaffected pupils. Systems for monitoring the attendance and progress of these pupils are well established. The attendance of pupils at these establishments is varied, but leaders are not complacent and are taking action to further improve their levels of attendance.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Typically, pupils enter the school with standards of attainment which are similar to the national average. Year 11 pupils who left in the summer of 2017 entered the school in Year 7 with levels of attainment that were significantly above the national average. During their time at this school, pupils made significantly less progress than other pupils nationally across a broad range of subjects from the same starting points. This has particularly been the case for disadvantaged pupils.
- In both 2016 and 2017 all groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged, the most able and those who have SEN and/or disabilities made significantly less progress than seen nationally. This included weak progress in English, mathematics and science. Rates of progress were also variable across the wider curriculum.
- According to leaders, outcomes 'are not where they should be'. The new assessment system now allows them to monitor how well pupils are doing across the school, based on their starting points. This is enabling them to intervene and support pupils before they get to Year 11, which is when historically the school 'fought fires' in a last-minute scramble to improve outcomes.
- The school's analysis of progress for current pupils shows modest signs of improvement. In almost all year groups, a large proportion of pupils are now on track to achieve outcomes in line with their starting points when they joined the school. From such a weak and entrenched historic low base, this is encouraging.
- The most able pupils are making progress in line with the general modest rate of improvement across the school. However, their progress is not as rapid as it could be because of the lack of challenge across subjects.
- Data from the assessments in October and December 2017 shows some improvement in the progress of disadvantaged pupils. The proportion of these pupils on track is increasing more quickly than the proportion of non-disadvantaged pupils on track.
- In lessons across and within subjects, some pupils are learning very well, for example in some Year 7 English lessons, key stage 4 mathematics and Year 10 physical education. Many pupils, however, do not make rapid and sustained progress because expectations are often too low. Evidence from observing lessons and checking pupils' books shows that work is often not challenging enough, so that pupils do not move on from what they already know or can do.

- Pupils in Year 8 who struggle with reading are supported by Year 10 pupils in a buddy-reading scheme. This has led to improvements in the pupils' reading ability and in their enjoyment of reading. Pupils state that as a result of this support they have grown in confidence when required to read in class.
- Pupils attending the two alternative providers are making improved progress as a result of a more appropriate curriculum which is better meeting their needs. This includes one-to-one tuition, a tailored curriculum of academic subjects and a personal development plan.
- The school has taken action to improve the quality of its work in preparing pupils for their next steps. Although the proportion of pupils progressing to a sustained destination at the end of Year 11 has been above the national average for the last two years, the school did not always guide pupils impartially, or appropriately. This has been corrected by the new leadership.

## School details

Unique reference number	108862
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10042209

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	576
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Young
Headteacher	Craig Knowles
Telephone number	0191 553 6756
Website	<a href="http://www.hetton-school.co.uk">www.hetton-school.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:hetton.school@schools.sunderland.gov.uk">hetton.school@schools.sunderland.gov.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	8–9 October 2013

## Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils with an education, health or care plan is similar to the national average. The proportion of pupils who receive support for SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The majority of pupils at the school are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium funding is above the national average.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at The Beacon of Light and the local authority Link School.
- The school hosts a local authority resource provision for a small number of pupils who have speech and communication difficulties.

- In 2016 and 2017, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 4 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.
- The headteacher was appointed as of January 2018. He had been acting headteacher since February 2017.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons across year groups and subject areas.
- A range of pupils' work was scrutinised. This sample included the work of pupils of different abilities and year groups.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors talked with groups of pupils both in meetings and informally around the site, including at break and lunchtime.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, those responsible for governance of the school, middle leaders, non-teaching staff, teachers at various career points and a representative of the local authority. Telephone meetings were held with the leaders of the off-site alternative provision used by the school.
- The lead inspector met with one parent, received one parental letter and took into account the 76 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 34 responses from parents using the free-text service.
- Inspectors took into account the 33 responses from pupils and the 28 responses from staff to Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching and other quality assurance records, records of external support visits, minutes of governors' meetings and information relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

## Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Catherine Garton

Ofsted Inspector

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