

Monkwearmouth School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108859
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	324849
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Simon Richards

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1330
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Cogdon
Headteacher	Mr Steve Wilkinson
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2006
School address	Torver Crescent Seaburn Dene Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR6 8LG
Telephone number	0191 5535555
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Monkwearmouth School is a larger than average sized secondary school of 1330 students located on the outskirts of Sunderland. Numbers are expected to fall by over 25% during the next five years due to the falling number of students in the city. The school has been a specialist college for arts since 2002. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below average, and the number who have English as an additional language is also below average. The school has received a number of awards including two Artsmark Gold awards. The school's performing arts facilities are used by other schools and community groups.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Monkwearmouth School provides a satisfactory level of education. Students' achievement is satisfactory and they reach average standards. The school has a number of good features. The clear direction of the headteacher is leading to improvements in teaching and learning, as well as promoting a high quality of care and support for students. Parents value the care and support that staff provide for their children and are aware the school is improving under the leadership of the headteacher. There are good relationships between staff and students which do much to promote students' enjoyment of school and good behaviour.

The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well, and agreed with inspectors that academic achievement and the quality of teaching and learning are key areas for improvement. The school has gone through a particularly challenging time with high rates of teacher absence and turn-over. Although standards declined at GCSE in 2008, this was because of particular difficulties with staffing and a problem with the entries for mathematics examinations. These have now been rectified. A more effective curriculum in Key Stage 4 is producing rising standards through improving motivation and attendance. The Key Stage 3 curriculum has yet to meet the needs of all learners to the same effect. School tracking of students in Years 10 and 11 suggests progress will improve in science in coming years.

Students make satisfactory progress in most lessons. Effective tracking of progress ensures that teachers know their students well. They do not, however, always ensure that the work is sufficiently challenging for all students. Teachers' marking often does not help students understand what they need to do to improve. In those departments where teaching and learning is most effective, accurate self-evaluation is used to monitor and review performance and raise standards. Some middle leaders are less confident about making judgements on lessons, sharing good practice and adopting changes in the curriculum.

The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well and has good capacity to improve. The school gives satisfactory value for money. Specialist arts status has been used well to improve the school's partnership working, but has not yet been a central feature of improving teaching and learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure consistently good practice in teaching and learning in matching work to students' different abilities, and marking that helps them understand how to improve.
- Ensure all departments monitor and review their performance effectively.
- Develop the curriculum at Key Stage 3 to meet the needs of all learners.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students join the school with attainment that is in line with expectation for their age. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards are close to the national average. It is a similar picture at the end of Key Stage 4: in 2008 the proportion of students with five or more good passes at GCSE including English and mathematics was 48%, which matched the national average. This was a

drop from the above average results in 2007. Well-founded data provided by the school suggests that standards are rising again as a result of more accurate tracking of student achievement and better matching of examination courses to student ability in mathematics and science.

The achievement of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is satisfactory overall, although students underachieve in a small number of subjects. Students meet targets that provide an adequate degree of challenge, and in some cases they meet more demanding targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students is good. Students' behaviour has improved and is now good. This is reflected in the low number of exclusions. Students behave well in lessons and move around school in a safe and orderly manner. A small minority of parents expressed concern about disruptive behaviour, although students felt behaviour was as good as that seen during the inspection. Students say they enjoy school activities. The school's status as a specialist college for arts has enabled it to provide extensive opportunities for students to develop their skills in music, dance and drama. Many students take advantage of these. Attendance has been above average since the last inspection. The number of students who are persistently absent is reducing as a result of the school's determined actions. Students feel safe in the school and are appreciative of the new 'Student Services and Inclusion', where many find emotional as well as academic support. Many take part in a range of sporting activities. However, most students leave the school premises during lunchtime and do not take full advantage of the healthy options available in the school canteen. Charity work encourages most students to appreciate the needs of others. The 'Student Voice' is an emerging aspect of students' contribution to the school community. Students show a wide appreciation of cultural diversity and traditions practised in minority ethnic groups. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students show a good sense of right and wrong through discussing moral issues such as the conflicts they witness in the Middle East. They demonstrated their spiritual awareness in an assembly that dealt sensitively with their grief about the very recent death of a fellow student. Students develop good personal qualities and computing skills which equip them well for adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and improving. Good relationships between teachers and students, as well as amongst students, permeate lessons and set a positive climate for learning. Together with teachers' effective classroom management skills, these ensure good behaviour and concentration in lessons. Students are generally clear about what they are going to learn because teachers share the objectives of the lesson with them from the outset. Teachers have good subject knowledge and explain key ideas well, but they sometimes miss opportunities to extend students' thinking. In the best lessons seen, teachers used challenging questioning and a range of approaches which promoted a brisk pace. Students clearly enjoyed these lessons. In lessons that are otherwise satisfactory, teachers' planning does not take sufficient account of students' different capabilities and prior learning to ensure that tasks are closely matched to individuals' learning needs. Students respond better in lessons which involve them in their

own learning and where they are able to take responsibility for their assessment. High levels of staff absence have adversely affected the quality of teaching and learning. However, more stable staffing, effective training and fewer absences have recently resulted in improved student learning and progress. Marking of work is variable both across the school and within subjects, and as a result students are often unclear on how to improve and extend their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory overall. The school recognises that the curriculum in Key Stage 3 is underdeveloped and does not allow sufficient opportunities for students to see the links between subjects. There are some opportunities for more able students in Year 9 to take more demanding qualifications, although these are limited in number. There are many good and developing features, especially in Key Stage 4. In Years 10 and 11, there is an increasingly personalised curriculum which is intended to meet the needs and interests of all students, although uptake of some very new subjects is still limited. The school is working with many local partners to provide access to a broadening range of vocational courses and options, including the new diplomas. The curriculum is adapted where necessary to encourage successful learning for students at risk of underachieving. However, while these initiatives have improved students' motivation and attendance, they have not yet had time to impact upon standards. The number who leave the school and who do not enter any further education, employment or training is low. Some students expressed disappointment at being unable to study two modern languages. In all year groups there is good provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT, including additional support for those students who require it. The recently introduced programme of social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) and the 'Respect' programme are contributing to students' good behaviour and personal development and well-being. The school's specialism in the arts provides some high quality enrichment activities, including links with Ballet Rambert and The Royal Opera House. The curriculum is enhanced by a range of popular extra-curricular activities, especially in sport, music and drama.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Well-directed and rapidly improving systems of support provide for students' academic, social and emotional needs. For example, the school's actions to reduce persistent absence have been very effective. Strong links with primary schools ensure a smooth transfer to Year 7. Students in Year 11 are equally well supported with specialist help and careers guidance. All required arrangements to ensure health and safety are in place. Good support is available for different groups of students. Those judged to be at risk of not reaching their potential now have effective arrangements to support their achievement, attendance and safety. Parents are supportive of the school and appreciate the care that the school provides for their children. Students are set challenging targets and there are effective systems for tracking their progress. Some students are not clear exactly how to reach challenging targets in those subjects where they achieve less well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher's vision for the school's development is now shared by most senior and middle leaders. Recently, a more robust and accurate system of measuring the quality of teaching and learning has enabled school leaders to bring about improvement in several departments. Senior leaders seek the views of students, parents and staff and use these to evaluate the school's progress. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school knows itself well. This leads to good improvement planning, with challenging, yet realistic targets, which are being used effectively to improve the school. The school leadership is strengthening the effectiveness of management in subject departments and developing amongst the staff a common sense of purpose to raise standards. There is now a clear focus on raising students' performance by improving teaching and learning across the school. Procedures for monitoring the work of the school within most subject departments are firmly in place. In the most effective lessons and subject departments, monitoring and review supports students' learning and informs teachers' professional development. Middle leaders value the opportunities to take responsibility and be accountable for wider aspects of the school's work. However, their role in assuring good quality teaching, the use of data to inform planning and effective marking of students' work is still inconsistent between subject departments. Governance is satisfactory and provides effective support and increasing challenge to the leadership team. Governors are not yet sufficiently involved in the evaluation of the school. The school makes a strong contribution to promoting community cohesion, and knows what is required to promote it. It engages effectively with the local community, and parents recognise and appreciate its work including students with different ethnic and cultural background.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

27 February 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Monkwearmouth School, Sunderland, SR6 8LG

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you for the warm welcome you offered us this week. We appreciated how much you told us about your school and how you feel it has improved. I would like to tell you the conclusions that we reached.

We found that almost all of you enjoy school and value the support and care you receive. The school staff work hard, and you value your good relationships with them. We found good behaviour in lessons and around school and this has helped your learning.

In some lessons and in some subjects, a number of you do not progress as well as you could, and we are asking the school to do more to match work in lessons to your individual abilities and to ensure that you know how to improve your work further.

Many of you were concerned that staff absence in the past has held back your progress. The situation is improving and presenting you with more stable teaching that will enable you to achieve your very best.

There have been changes in the Key Stage 4 curriculum that have given you more opportunities to reach the highest grades in the GCSE examinations. We have asked the school to develop the Key Stage 3 curriculum further to help the progress of those of you in Years 7, 8 and 9.

The school is well led by the headteacher, and he and the staff are trying to improve it further. One way they will be doing this is to improve the way that all subject departments identify strengths and weaknesses, and then use this to improve all teaching to the quality of the best.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Simon Richards

Lead inspector