

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: George Stephenson High School

Southgate, Killingworth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE12 6SA

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 March 2025

Outcome

George Stephenson High School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school is a warm and respectful place to learn. Staff care for pupils and strive to do their best for them. Pupils enjoy being in school. They feel safe. Pupils benefit from the help they get from their teachers. The school has high expectations of all pupils. Most pupils respond well to these expectations including students in the sixth form.

Pupils' behaviour around the school is calm and purposeful. In lessons, pupils are encouraged to work together to help each other with their learning. Around the school, pupils are considerate of each other, staff and visitors. Pupils say that bullying is rare, but when it does occur the school deals with it well.

Pupils get lots of support to help them reach learning goals. They can tackle the tasks set for them because of this.

The school provides a range of purposeful activities outside of the classroom. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), benefit from these opportunities to develop their talents and interests.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The curriculum meets pupils' needs. The school has designed a curriculum that is increasingly ambitious for what pupils can achieve. This includes an increasing number of pupils studying languages at GCSE. This means the number of pupils following the English Baccalaureate pathway is increasing too.

Teachers check pupils' understanding regularly. Teachers make careful checks of learning as it happens, so that they can intervene if there are any misunderstandings. This helps

pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. However, some teachers do not consistently match activities in lessons to pupils' needs, when they could be challenged further. As a result, some pupils sometimes find certain tasks too easy and may need additional support to achieve their full potential.

The school has worked hard to make sure pupils with SEND get the support they need. There is more work to do to make sure teachers are provided with more detailed information. For example, teachers need more guidance on the type of support these pupils may need to help them with their written tasks.

Pupils' outcomes in the most recent external examinations are not as strong as leaders anticipated. The school has considered these outcomes in context and has made changes to the way pupils learn in the classroom. For example, teachers now match learning activities more precisely to pupils' starting points. This means all pupils can take part in learning activities because they are manageable for them. Pupils are benefiting from these changes.

Reading is a high priority. The school provides lots of support for pupils who may struggle with their reading. The school has developed effective ways to identify the reasons that some pupils struggle to improve their reading. Additional support is then designed around these reasons to help pupils improve.

Students in the sixth form access a wide range of subjects that are offered in partnership with another local provider. Students also take part in enrichment experiences, which contribute towards their personal development. Work experience opportunities are highly valued by sixth-form students.

Pupils are generally focused and attentive during lessons, creating a productive learning environment. Disruptions are rare, and pupils are encouraged to report any inappropriate behaviour or comments from others. Pupils say that such behaviour is very uncommon. When incidents do occur, the school takes swift and effective action.

The school provides a wide range of opportunities beyond the classroom. One of the school's strengths is the work it does in the local community. There are also a wide range of extracurricular activities on offer. Along with the taught curriculum, these opportunities ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of high quality. During the inspection, pupils presented to their peers in a year group assembly, for example. There are also a wide range of lunchtime and after-school clubs for pupils to take advantage of. The school has put in place a high-quality programme of careers advice and guidance for all pupils.

The school is considerate of the workload and well-being of staff. Staff receive effective training to develop their practice. The governing body is effective in holding school leaders to account. School leaders have acted promptly to address improvement priorities identified in the last full inspection. They are continuing to improve this school further.

Staff and pupils know who to talk to when they have a concern. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. The school makes sure pupils have the care and support they need.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils with SEND are not always supported to access the curriculum as well as they might. This is because staff do not always routinely adapt their input to ensure that pupils can access the curriculum effectively. Because of this, there is some variability in the quality of written work that pupils with SEND produce. The school needs to ensure that teachers further support pupils with SEND by providing them with adapted resources to support their written work.
- Some pupils are not consistently given work that sufficiently matches their starting points as precisely as others. As a result, some pupils do not receive tasks that challenge them sufficiently. This means that some pupils are not being stretched and challenged as much as they could be. The school should ensure that learning activities are ambitious and challenging for pupils so that they reach the potential they are capable of.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in November 2019.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	108639
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	10346261
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,164
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	87
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andrew Elliott
Headteacher	Peter Douthwaite
Website	www.gshs.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	27 and 28 November 2019

Information about this school

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, curriculum leaders and other members of staff. The lead inspector met with representatives of the local authority and of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, along with responses submitted as free text. Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Barry Found, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Bernard Clark	Ofsted Inspector
Gabrielle Reddington	Ofsted Inspector

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