

Inspection of George Stephenson High School

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

Inspection dates: 27–28 November 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff have high expectations for pupils and each other. This is a key ingredient of the school community. During lesson visits, pupils were attentive and respectful. Most show positive attitudes to their learning. There are strong relationships between teachers and pupils. As a result, pupils have achieved better examination results in a wide range of subjects since the previous inspection.

The majority of pupils behave well during social times. They take responsibility for their actions. Pupils in the main school and students in the sixth form are proud to be part of George Stephenson High School. There is a small minority of pupils who are yet to display the levels of responsibility their peers do. Pupils say how these pupils are too silly during social times. Pupils are reassured by staff and they know who to speak to if they have a worry or concern. During discussions, pupils said they are confident that if any issue arises a member of staff will sort it out for them.

Pupils access a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Such activities benefit pupils' personal, social and cultural development.

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

George Stephenson High School has improved since the previous inspection. Staff, pupils and parents share this view. All leaders are committed to ensuring that pupils benefit from a well-planned curriculum. The curriculum on offer throughout key stage 3 is broad. It provides pupils with a good foundation of knowledge and skills. This prepares pupils well for the interesting curriculum on offer at key stage 4. Similarly, in the sixth form, students can opt from a suite of academic and applied courses. There is a diverse curriculum on offer throughout the school. Pupils in the main school and students in the sixth form are well served. They get appropriate advice and guidance. As a result, they choose subjects that suit their strengths and interests. Leaders and governors are reflective and review their curriculum offer regularly. They have an accurate view of the strengths of the school. They know what needs further improvement. For example, the addition of computer science to the curriculum has proven popular. Leaders intend for it to be offered more widely.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. In many subjects, schemes of work make it clear to teachers what they need to teach and when. Teachers know how pupils are doing because assessment is used well. This helps them to check what pupils know and remember. For example, in modern languages, history and geography pupils can recall prior learning well. It is less effective in mathematics, where some pupils struggled to recall what they had learned before. This is because the curriculum is not as well planned as in other subjects. Some concepts are not revisited enough or in enough depth for pupils to secure their understanding. This is particularly in key stage 3.

For most of the time, pupils and sixth-form students say teachers expect them to think hard about their learning. A review of pupils' work in modern languages, history and geography shows how they are studying topics in great depth. Pupils also said that in some subjects their work was sometimes too easy. This is particularly in English, and in key stage 3. Aspects of the English curriculum lack opportunities for pupils to grapple with tricky concepts or ideas. Pupils and sixth-form students would benefit from developing more detailed knowledge across a wider range of subjects.

Teachers have good relationships with the pupils in their classes. Pupils said that behaviour has improved, and most staff use school routines and rewards fairly. Most pupils contribute well in lessons because teachers question them well.

Leaders ensure that those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can access a range of well-planned literacy support. This is benefiting most. Teachers get information about the individual needs of pupils with SEND. Some staff meet these pupils' specific needs well. However, a much broader programme of professional development would benefit staff so that pupils' experiences are consistent across the curriculum.

Students in the sixth form said they feel 'lucky' to be part of the school community. They are great ambassadors for the school and act as positive role models to younger pupils. Most students achieve well. Almost all students progress onto appropriate higher-education courses, training or employment.

A concerted effort to improve attendance has paid off. Attendance is now at the national average for pupils in the main school, and it is very good in the sixth form. While exclusions have risen so far this year, they are still low. Fewer disadvantaged pupils miss school. Leaders' strategies to improve attendance and improve behaviour have benefited pupils' learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The deputy headteacher and her team ensure that safeguarding takes high priority.

Staff are well trained to look after and care for pupils. They understand the school's safeguarding procedures. They are aware of the need to share any concerns with appropriate people. They do so in a timely manner.

Pupils know there is always somebody to talk to when they need help. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. A small number of pupils had concerns about how bullying is dealt with; inspectors were satisfied that the school has a handle on this area of their work.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The content choices in schemes of work for English and mathematics, particularly for those pupils in Year 9, lack breadth and depth. Pupils lack the depth of understanding needed to be as well prepared as they could be for key stage 4. Leaders should continue with their efforts to further improve the quality and progression of curriculum schemes of work, particularly for transition between key stages 3 and 4. The transition arrangements have been applied.
- The quality of planning for pupils to think hard about a concept or idea varies across subjects, and at times pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to think deeply about a concept or idea. In the curriculum plans, leaders and teachers must identify opportunities for pupils, and students in the sixth form, to think more deeply about concepts. Leaders should ensure that these opportunities are effective in maximising pupils' progress.
- A small minority of staff have accessed the training they need to support pupils with SEND well. However, in a few subjects pupils with SEND do not acquire the knowledge and skills they need. Leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator, should ensure that they use professional development opportunities to share expertise in supporting the learning of pupils with SEND, so that they can help more pupils with SEND achieve higher standards.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	108639
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	10121687
Type of school	Secondary
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	1,203
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	112
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andrew Elliott
Headteacher	Ian Wilkinson
Website	http://www.gshs.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–2 November 2017

Information about this school

- The school currently uses alternative provision at Moorbridge and PALS to contribute to the education of eight pupils.
- The school is a larger-than-average-sized secondary school. Almost all pupils are White British. Very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium is average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below average.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- During the inspection, we spoke with pupils about their work and what it was like to be a pupil at the school. We also spoke to sixth-form students about what it was like to be part of the school's sixth form.
- We held meetings with senior leaders, governors, curriculum leaders and the school improvement partner from the local authority.
- We reviewed documentation, which included leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, and the school improvement plan. We scrutinised information about attendance and behaviour.
- We additionally reviewed a range of documentation and information about safeguarding, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff and support for pupils. We also visited and spoke to representatives of the alternative provision used by the school.
- We considered the views expressed by parents and carers through the 135 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, as well as parents' comments received via the free-text facility on Ofsted Parent View. We considered the 96 responses to the questionnaire for pupils and the 54 responses to the questionnaire for staff.
- We focused deeply on English, mathematics, history, geography and modern languages during the inspection. We met with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils, met with teaching staff and looked at pupils' work. We also considered other subjects as part of the inspection.

Inspection team

Darren Stewart, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Jamie Lawler	Ofsted Inspector
Jill Bowe	Ofsted Inspector
Garry Stout	Ofsted Inspector
Marc Doyle	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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