

Durham Johnston Comprehensive School

Crossgate Moor, Durham, DH1 2SU

Inspection dates

11–12 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Durham Johnston provides an excellent education for all of its students, preparing them well for their next steps and for life in modern Britain.
- The headteacher, senior and middle leaders and governors provide outstanding leadership. They are ambitious for their school. They have an unwavering focus on improving teaching and learning further and also on nurturing the abilities, skills and talents of each student and member of staff in the school.
- This is an improving school because of the high expectations and drive from leaders at all levels.
- Students make accelerated progress in Key Stages 3 and 4. This means that they reach standards in their GCSE examinations which are significantly higher than the national average in a wide range of subjects.
- The most able students achieve very well, and the proportion of GCSE A* and A grades is significantly above average across the curriculum.
- Students are keen to learn and relish the challenges that their teachers set. Their excellent attitudes to learning contribute strongly to their success.
- Teachers in most subject areas use information about students' performance and information from marking to plan activities that are challenging, engaging and fun. However, this exemplary practice is not always shared across the school.
- Students are polite, courteous and well-mannered. They are always smartly dressed, have great pride in their school and look after it well.
- Students are happy and feel very safe in school. The school's procedures for keeping students safe are exemplary.
- The sixth form is outstanding because it is led very effectively and because the quality of teaching that students receive each day is outstanding. This means that students make excellent progress in all aspects of their learning, are happy, confident and have high ambitions for themselves.
- The sixth form makes a strong contribution to the ethos of the school.
- Governors know the school very well indeed and have an accurate view of teaching and of students' achievement. They hold school leaders rigorously to account because of the impressive range of skills and experience that governors have.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed teaching and learning in 35 lessons, one of which was jointly observed with the school’s leader of teaching and learning. Inspectors also paid shorter visits to some subject areas, the after-school choir rehearsal and to a school assembly.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of school documentation including the school’s view of how well it is doing, the school development plan, monitoring and tracking information, minutes of governing body meetings and safeguarding documents.
- Students’ work was scrutinised in their books and in files in lessons. A separate work scrutiny of students’ work was carried out across a range of subjects and year groups.
- Inspectors observed students’ behaviour in lessons, while students were moving around the school site and during social times, such as break and lunch. Inspectors spoke with students during these times to learn what they think about their school and how well it provides for them.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, representatives from the governing body, the school’s special needs coordinator (SENCO) and a representative from the local authority. Additionally, discussions were held with three groups of students. A telephone discussion was held with one of the two off-site providers that the school uses.
- Inspectors listened to students in Year 7 reading from books they were enjoying.
- Inspectors took account of the 144 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) as well as a number of letters and emails from parents. Additionally, the inspection team analysed returns from the 40 responses to the staff questionnaire, and also a staff and student survey commissioned by the school from an external independent source.

Inspection team

Mark Patton, lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Graeme Clarke	Additional Inspector
John Downs	Additional Inspector
Georgiana Sale	Additional Inspector
Paul Welford	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Durham Johnston is much larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students, those supported by pupil premium funding, is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding to support students known to be eligible for free schools meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The overwhelming majority of students are of White British heritage. There are very few students from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs or with disabilities is broadly average.
- Very few students leave or join the school during Years 10 and 11.
- Support for a very small number of Year 11 students is provided by The Green School, Durham and by New College, Durham.
- The school enters students early for GCSE examinations in mathematics.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress in English and in mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- The school is a Stonewall School Champion, holds the International School award and the Prince's Teaching Institute Mark for Art, Geography, History, Mathematics, Music and School Leadership.
- Staff from the school support North Ormesby Primary Academy, Caldicotes Primary Academy and a number of other primary and secondary schools locally.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement even further so that it is outstanding in all subjects by ensuring that the exemplary practices found in most subjects are shared and embedded in the rest.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- School leaders, led by the headteacher and the governors, have established a culture of high expectation, tolerance and ambition. This culture is shared by staff and students and is central to the school's drive for continuous improvement. The impact is that students' attitudes to learning, achievement and all-round development are outstanding. The leadership and management of the sixth form is also outstanding.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity outstandingly well. Discrimination is very rare and is tackled vigorously when it occurs. This creates an harmonious ethos that pervades all aspects of the school's work.
- Middle leadership in the school is very strong. These leaders are highly focussed on improving teaching and the outcomes for students. They have an excellent knowledge of how well teachers and students perform in their departments. They have a clear understanding of their roles and know what is expected of them if the school is to continue to improve. As a result, the school has excellent capacity for further improvement.
- Leaders at all levels have a very accurate view of the performance of the school. They work very effectively with staff to improve teaching. The leadership of teaching and learning is a particular strength of the school, as is the highly-thought-of programme of continuous professional development that accurately matches the needs of individuals or groups of staff. Pay progression is linked to improved teaching, leadership and achievement. In the rare event of any underperformance, it is managed quickly and effectively.
- The curriculum is another strength of the school. This includes the vast range of stimulating and exciting activities that students can engage in outside of lesson time, for example sporting activities, music and drama clubs. These opportunities are open to all and make a very strong contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students at the school. This prepares students very well for life in modern Britain.
- Students' skills in literacy, oracy and numeracy are skilfully developed across many subject areas. For example, they produce high-quality graphs and charts in geography and also perform outstandingly well in the public speaking events organised annually in school.
- Students receive impartial careers education, information and guidance throughout each key stage. Students told inspectors that they find this very helpful in enabling them to make good choices at GCSE option time at 16 and when deciding what to do after leaving the sixth form. The impact is that very small numbers of students do not enter education, employment or training when they leave the school at either 16 or at 18.
- Leaders and governors monitor the use and impact of pupil premium funding exceptionally well. This has a very positive impact on improving the standards that disadvantaged students reach because it provides highly effective support for these students in a number of ways. The school's annual report on how it spends additional funding, published on the website, is an example of good practice and helps parents and carers to see the impact on students' achievements.
- Leaders monitor the attendance and achievement of the very small number of students who attend off-site provision regularly, and there is robust and regular contact between Durham Johnston and those other providers. This ensures that students attend regularly and make good progress in their work.
- The school uses its expertise in leadership and in teaching and learning to great effect in supporting other schools when it can. The local authority provides appropriate light touch support and challenge to the school, and also uses the skills and expertise of the school's teachers and leaders to support those in other schools across the county.
- The school's systems and procedures to protect and safeguard students and staff are exemplary.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is an outstanding feature of the leadership of Durham Johnston. Governors know their school exceptionally well and make frequent visits to the school to find things out for themselves by talking with staff and students.
 - Governors are ambitious for their school, have an impressive understanding of performance data and of the quality of teaching, and set challenging targets for further improvement.
 - Governors use their skills and experience to monitor the school's performance regularly. Performance management systems are rigorous and governors ensure that staff only receive financial reward if their students reach their achievement targets. Governors hold middle and senior leaders to account effectively for any dips in performance, but are also quick to praise and reward exceptional work. They monitor the use and impact of additional funding very effectively.

- Governors discharge their statutory duties around the management of the school's finances and the safeguarding of students diligently.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students, staff and parents share this view.
- Students throughout the school are courteous, polite and respectful. They adopt the school's culture of celebrating diversity. Students with special educational needs or who are vulnerable receive superb care and support from staff and fellow students in school. A physically disabled student told an inspector, 'This is a great school. I am happy to be here and enjoy my work.'
- Students show a consistently strong desire to learn well, achieve well and produce their best. No low-level disruption or misbehaviour of any kind was observed during the inspection. The school's behaviour logs indicate that disruption to learning is very rare and continues to fall. Staff use the school's systems for rewards and sanctions consistently well.
- Students are keen to learn and come to school regularly. Their attendance rates are well above national averages. Rates of persistent absence (absent for 15% of the time or more) were half the national average last year, and have declined again this year. Rates of exclusion are low.
- During formal and informal discussions with inspectors, students showed an appreciation of different cultures, faiths, sexualities and backgrounds. They and the school celebrate the differences between people and respect the right of everyone to live their life how they choose. Students espouse these aspects of life in modern Britain extremely well. Bullying or any form of discrimination is extremely rare and is vigorously and swiftly dealt with when it occurs.
- The very small number of students who receive part of their education off-site are monitored closely by the school. The school and the off-site providers work effectively together to deal with any inappropriate behaviour that might arise.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure, including those very few students who attend off-site provision, is outstanding
- The school's systems and procedures around child protection, staff training and safer recruitment are exemplary. Similarly, robust systems are in place to identify risks, manage these appropriately and so prevent students coming to any harm.
- Students are taught how to identify potential risks to themselves and to others, and how to protect themselves against these. Students from all key stages in the school were able to describe the risks associated with activities such as substance misuse and using the internet and mobile technologies, and were able to say how they protected themselves from possible harm.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching over time is outstanding. This leads to accelerated progress for students and the attainment of high standards in almost all subject areas that significantly exceed national averages at GCSE, AS and A level. Such high standards of attainment have been the norm at this school for many years now.
- Students who are academically more able are challenged and stretched by their teachers to achieve the highest standards possible. This is reflected in the very high proportions of GCSE A* and A grades and A level A* to B grades in many subject areas.
- There is no one particular teaching methodology or style that dominates at Durham Johnston. Instead, teachers use their deep knowledge about their students and their impressive subject knowledge to adapt teaching approaches to the subject and to the particular learning objective being worked on. This enables students to progress outstandingly well. This agile approach means that students do not get bored and are inspired, excited and motivated as they go from lesson to lesson each day. An outstanding example of this was observed in a sixth form Latin lesson about Cicero and the four virtues. The students were held in rapt attention as the teacher dramatically expounded the 'manly virtues' with great comedic effect.
- Teachers use a variety of approaches to check students' understanding. They use this information wisely to pause learning when this is appropriate, or to push on and challenge students when they are ready. Marking and feedback on students' work is regular and students told inspectors that this helped them to learn better when teachers gave them time to reflect on the comments. In a small number of subjects,

these and other approaches are not used as effectively as in the rest. The school recognises that this exemplary practice is not shared as well as it could be across the school.

- Students' skills in reading, writing, oracy and mathematics are developed and promoted very well across all subject areas. This was seen in students' work in class, and in books examined during an extensive work scrutiny.
- Reading for study and for pleasure is widely and frequently promoted throughout the school. For example, current poets and writers come into the school to work with students. In addition, sixth form students created a DVD entitled *The Perks of Being a Booklover*, which they showed to younger students in assembly. The students that the inspectors heard reading were fluent, enjoyed their reading and used effective strategies when they came across new or unfamiliar words. As several students said, 'We love reading. It's just great,' as they chuckled to themselves while reading funny passages aloud to an inspector.
- Homework is set regularly and makes a good contribution to developing students' independent learning skills. Homework tasks also provide opportunities for students to practise key skills in each subject, as well as to develop deeper thinking.
- Students who have special educational needs are supported very well by their teachers and support staff. This ensures that these students make rapid progress to reach standards that are on average only half a GCSE grade behind their peers in school, and above that of similar students nationally.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students achieve exceptionally well. They enter from their primary schools on average one term ahead of other students nationally. By the time they reach the end of Year 11 they have made accelerated progress and attain an average GCSE grade B in English and in mathematics, compared to a national average of grade C.
- In 2014, the proportion of students who gained five or more good GCSE passes, including in English and mathematics, was 78%. This was a 6% improvement on 2013 for the school, when the national average fell by 5%. Progress in English and in mathematics was strong: the proportions of students making expected progress, and the proportions making more-than-expected progress, in these two subjects far exceeded the national averages. Current school tracking data, verified in lessons and by scrutinising students' books, indicates that this improvement trend is set to continue.
- On average, students attained almost a grade higher in English and in mathematics than other students nationally. Other subjects that performed at least as strongly in 2014 were business studies, geography, history, religious studies and information and communication technology (ICT).
- Disadvantaged students make good progress from their starting points in relation to other students nationally. These students attained approximately two-thirds of a GCSE grade less than non-disadvantaged students nationally in English and in mathematics. This gap is larger in school because of the exceptionally high standards attained by a large proportion of the most able students. The school is working hard to close both these gaps and evidence gathered during the inspection demonstrates that this is effective. Indicative data for 2015 show these gaps are narrowing.
- Students with disabilities and those with special educational needs make progress that is generally at least as good as other students in the school, and exceeds that of similar students nationally. Similarly, their attainment in English, in mathematics and in a number of other subjects in 2014 was at least good, and generally was significantly higher than similar students nationally.
- The most able students at the school make rapid and sustained progress in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 so that they reach very high standards in English, mathematics and a host of other subjects at the end of their GCSE studies. This is shown by the very high proportions of students attaining the top GCSE grades of A* or A in 2014. These were significantly above national averages in English language, English literature, mathematics, science, physical education and many more subjects.
- The achievement of the very small numbers of students who study off-site is closely monitored by the school. These students achieve well.
- School leaders decide very carefully which students should be entered early for examination in GCSE mathematics. There is strong evidence to suggest that this policy has no detrimental effect on students reaching their potential in mathematics. In fact, students who are entered early for mathematics go on to deepen and extend their knowledge, skills and understanding in this subject by studying related mathematical subjects.
- Standards attained at AS and at A level are higher than those seen nationally, and significantly higher in many subjects, including art and design, and business studies. This is because of the outstanding teaching

sixth form students receive and the rapid progress they continue to make in their studies after GCSE.

The sixth form provision is outstanding

- Leadership of the sixth form is outstanding. Leaders are highly effective in creating a sixth form culture that is characterised by high aspirations and a strong sense of community. This begins with a 'probation period' during which students are helped to develop the dispositions necessary for success in the sixth form. Parents are kept fully informed about life in the sixth form in general, and also about the progress of their children. Parents and carers comment favourably on the weekly bulletin and the termly monitoring reports that they receive.
- The behaviour and safety of students in the sixth form are both outstanding. Students are very keen to learn, and display exemplary attitudes to learning and towards each other and the staff.
- Teaching over time is outstanding. Students identified teaching as the strength of the sixth form. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent and teachers relate knowledge and skills to examination specifications extremely well, maintaining students' motivation and stimulating their curiosity.
- Student achievement in the sixth form is outstanding. Attainment in almost every subject is significantly above the national average, and overall progress is significantly positive for AS- and A-level qualifications.
- More than 90% of students who start Year 12 successfully complete Year 13. This is a higher proportion than found nationally. The small number of students who leave the sixth form do so to follow vocational pathways or apprenticeships.
- All students have access to opportunities to engage in work which does not lead to qualification through the community enrichment part of their individual study programmes. This community aspect can be developed in the school or within the wider community. Students are used widely as role models across the school. Two students represent the sixth form on the governing body of the school.
- As a result of high quality teaching and the broader experiences to which they are exposed, students are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment. In 2014, 85% of Year 13 leavers entered higher education, more than 50% securing places at Russell Group universities, including Oxford and Cambridge. Students in receipt of sixth form bursaries, and those who had been classed as disadvantaged during their GCSE studies, were equally successful in securing places at prestigious universities.

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

Unique reference number	114312
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	453391

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	1,505
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	326
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Professor Simon Morris
Headteacher	Dr Michael Wardle
Date of previous school inspection	15 February 2011
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