

Netherhall School

Netherhall Road, Maryport, Cumbria CA15 6NT

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This school has been transformed in a remarkably short period of time. A new team of effective senior leaders and a reinvigorated governing body have played major roles in lifting a school that was failing. Staff and pupils say, without question, the headteacher has been an inspiration, giving them a belief that all can achieve. Throughout his tenure, the headteacher has demonstrated passion, integrity and highly skilled leadership.
- Older pupils proudly describe the remarkable improvements to the school. They are grateful to the headteacher and for the hard work of the staff for making this a good school. Pupils recognise that their future prospects have been improved considerably by the much better education they are now receiving.
- Outcomes improved for pupils leaving the school in 2017, although achievement was still below that seen nationally. The progress of pupils currently in the school is very strong across all subjects and across all ranges of ability. The quality of teaching and learning is improving rapidly.
- Strategies to improve pupils' ability to read well are having a very positive effect. This is building pupils' confidence and ability to improve their progress across all of their subjects.
- Attendance has improved rapidly. There is a wide range of rewards for good attendance and staff go beyond what could normally be expected of them to get pupils to attend well. However, the strongest incentive for pupils to attend Netherhall School is the better quality of education they are now receiving.
- Not surprisingly, the vast majority of pupils are eager to take advantage of these new opportunities and a better curriculum. They behave very well. Management systems work well for the few pupils who struggle to behave.
- The sixth form has improved from a point where it may not have remained open, due to a lack of students, to a thriving aspect at the heart of the school. Here too, the quality of teaching has improved considerably. In addition, provision to enhance pupils' leadership qualities and personal development has developed from virtually nothing to an integral part of their education.
- Leaders are quite modest when reflecting on their achievements and know what they need to do to improve further. The progress boys make is generally good, but it is not as strong as girls', particularly in English. While most pupils who were struggling have been helped by very good support, not all have. Leaders are confident that almost all pupils receive teaching that is at least consistently good.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Closely monitor the progress of the few pupils who do not respond quickly to the additional support intended to improve their literacy skills, wider learning and progress. Seek and implement alternative strategies in order for them to reach their potential.
- Bring the achievement of boys more into line with that of girls, particularly in English.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching, eliminating any that is less than good. Ensure that all teachers consistently apply the school's policy on promoting good literacy skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has transformed the culture throughout the school. Pupils are enthusiastic about learning and teachers are enthusiastic about teaching. Both these groups display considerable loyalty to the headteacher and the school. Teachers say that before the headteacher took up his role, morale was very low. Pupils say learning was dull and there were very few extra-curricular or enrichment activities. Pupils say they now love coming to school and this is borne out by the rapidly improving rates of attendance.
- There are many examples where staff and pupils are now giving so much more to the school. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular and voluntary activities which broaden pupils' experiences and provide them with opportunities to help others. The range and extent of these opportunities mean that almost all pupils benefit from them. Furthermore, these opportunities are a critical element in enhancing pupils' personal development. One of the most notable activities is 'lesson 7', a session at the end of every day when staff are available in their rooms. Pupils of all ages voluntarily attend these additional classes to help them catch up with work or to help them understand a difficult concept. These sessions are well attended.
- The headteacher has transformed the senior leadership team and restructured the roles and responsibilities of leaders at all levels. Every member of staff is clear as to what they are accountable for and how their performance will be evaluated. Support for those who need to improve is developmental. Staff are inspired to improve.
- Subject leaders relish their new and significant responsibilities. They say they welcome being seen as the experts in their subjects and being given responsibility for ensuring that their departments improve. They believe the collaborative approach with the very supportive senior leadership team is critical to them being able to do a good job. Through this approach, and the trust that has been given to them, the capacity of subject leaders has grown and they have been integral to the school's improvement.
- The school has developed its own system for tracking the achievement of pupils. This provides frequent updates on how well pupils are progressing. Senior leaders use this information to evaluate the effectiveness of the full range of strategies they have implemented to improve teaching and learning. Leaders of subjects use the system to analyse the progress of individual pupils and respond quickly when they identify a pupil whose progress slows.
- School leaders invested some considerable time in working with parents, carers, pupils and staff to produce a reporting system that meets the needs of all users. Based on the school's high-quality and carefully developed pupil-tracking system, reports enable parents to be updated frequently and accurately about their children's progress, attitudes to school and attendance.
- The school's tracking system has proved to provide accurate information. In 2017, the school was able to anticipate, with a high degree of precision, the outcomes for Year 11 and Year 13 pupils. During the inspection, inspectors were able to validate the accuracy of information the school has on the progress and attainment of current

pupils by conducting an extensive survey of pupils' work.

- The curriculum is better meeting the needs and aspirations of all pupils and is having a positive impact on their achievement. The curriculum that pupils follow in key stage 4 is undergoing considerable change. Traditionally, pupils sat a wide range of examinations, but with little success. To deepen pupils' learning, more time has been allocated to studying mathematics, English and science. Leaders have increased time given to pupils taking optional GCSEs by enabling them to start their key stage 4 studies in Year 9. Leaders have also introduced additional subjects. The school has been able to effect less change to the curriculum for the current Year 11.
- In Netherhall School, standards of reading and literacy have always been a barrier to pupils' learning. On his appointment, the current headteacher made radical changes to how these weaknesses were addressed. Now, all pupils in Years 7 to 9 participate in a structured programme to improve their reading. Pupils are motivated by a wide range of strategies to fully engage them in reading. Pupils know their reading age and many are proud to tell you how their reading age has advanced; for example, improving a year in one term is not uncommon. Many pupils make even more rapid advances. The school has introduced a highly structured additional support programme for those pupils whose reading age is particularly low. Year 12 and Year 13 students are paired with a weak reader. These sixth-form students are trained in how to help younger pupils improve their reading. The benefits to the younger pupils are clear and the sixth-form students gain from the experience in helping someone else. This develops their leadership skills and they experience a real sense of achievement as they witness their 'buddy' improve.
- The school targets well the additional funding it receives to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who join the school in Year 7 with low levels of literacy and numeracy. While some funding is directed at large-scale initiatives, such as reading programmes, most of these pupils benefit from support that specifically meets their unique needs.
- The leadership of teaching has improved considerably. Some of the responsibility for improving teaching has been delegated to subject leaders. They have been allocated professional development time to address specific developments within their department. School-wide initiatives have been successful, most notably the enhanced reading programmes, the quality of teachers' use of questioning and strategies to improve the progress of all pupils, including, and most particularly, the most able. Senior leaders have the skills to evaluate the quality of teaching and address weaknesses through good support and guidance. Performance management procedures are met and these systems are beginning to contribute to the improved teaching seen throughout the school.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is another aspect which has seen recent improvement from a very low base. The needs of pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan are accurately assessed and their support is well targeted. These pupils make good progress from a wide range of starting points. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities but who are not required to have an EHC plan are making variable rates of progress because the needs of some of these pupils have not yet been clearly identified and so their support is not as well targeted. As with much of the school, the vast majority are being well served by the

provision and are making good progress. Additional funding the school receives for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well spent.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong and getting stronger. Through educational visits, assemblies and in lessons, pupils learn about responsibilities in the wide world that we live in. Many are keen environmentalists. Those who visited the Belgian battlefields appreciated the sacrifices previous generations have made for this country. A weakness identified at the last inspection was the lack of pupils' cultural awareness and of British values. This weakness has been addressed. Improved behaviour and attitudes to their education reflect pupils' improving moral code.
- This school is managing to find the right balance between helping older pupils make up for historical weaknesses in teaching and learning and driving successful learning from Year 7.

Governance of the school

- The governing body responded positively to the outcome of the previous inspection and undertook a review of its practice. The appointment, for one year, of a national leader in governance helped the governing body learn quickly. Governors have always wanted the very best in secondary schooling for their community. However, now they have the capacity to support school improvement, challenge leaders and rigorously hold them to account for their responsibilities. Governors are to be congratulated for their contribution to the rapid improvement of the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's ethos of excellent teamwork, support and improvement has contributed to a culture of ensuring that all pupils are safe and feel safe. Those pupils who are potentially more at risk are particularly well looked after. Lines of communication within the school are excellent and the well-trained staff know when and how to respond to any concerns they may have. Pupils trust the adults in the school and their confidence in confiding in adults makes a considerable contribution to promoting high standards in safeguarding. The school ensures that it maintains good communications with other agencies responsible for safeguarding. It also ensures that any interventions are effective and timely.
- Administrative aspects are efficient. Files reveal a systematic approach that enables efficient evaluations of every case.
- Pupils are taught how to be safe and look after each other. This includes dangers they may be exposed to in their local communities and while using social media. The school's computer filtering and monitoring systems have a proven record of keeping pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The most striking aspect of teaching in this school is the obvious collaboration between teachers and pupils. Teachers know their pupils well. They know how to motivate

individuals and are fully aware of what their pupils already know, understand and can do. This enables teachers to plan learning very well, matching activities to the needs of all ability groups in their classes. Pupils will happily discuss their learning with each other and with their teacher. Pupils' levels of confidence are rising along with their enthusiasm for learning.

- The supportive and 'can do' culture in classes inspires pupils to learn. They become highly motivated by success. Teachers' expectations of what their pupils can achieve are rising with pupils' ever-increasing rates of progress.
- All teachers fully understand the particular barriers to learning that many Netherhall pupils have. They know that weak literacy and a lack of experience and confidence in examination situations prevent their pupils from mirroring their classroom success in examinations. All teachers strive to address these barriers. Even pupils in Year 7 are given parts of GCSE questions and are taught how to answer questions well. All teachers promote pupils' literacy skills. However, there is some variability in the effectiveness of this as some teachers do not follow the school's policy requiring them to correct spelling, grammar and punctuation errors. Subject specific terminology is well taught and used by pupils.
- Teachers have been improving the use of questioning to help pupils of all abilities improve their understanding. This is effective and pupils' confidence is rising in being able to express their thoughts and ideas through speaking and writing.
- The impact of collaboration between departments is evident in the consistent way pupils represent numerical information graphically and in tabular form in different subjects. Expectations of presentation are high and pupils present information accurately.
- Teachers set homework regularly and according to the school's policy. Teachers have high expectations about the quality of pupils' work and keeping to deadlines. Pupils are well aware of the sanctions if homework is not completed to the expected standard on time. However, they say this is not usually an issue because they can see that the homework helps them to consolidate their learning or develop their study skills.
- Teachers prepare lessons and learning activities which pupils find interesting. This is helping to engage pupils much more in lessons. Pupils also appreciate the value of their much-improved education. Consequently, throughout the school, there is virtually no low-level distracting behaviour.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Adults know pupils very well. Teachers know the qualities of every pupil and they know what their pupils' needs are. There is great mutual respect between adults and pupils. These excellent relations are the foundation for a very strong welfare culture throughout the school.
- Pupils say that they are safe, and that they feel very safe and very well looked after. Pupils' physical and emotional needs are taken care of so that all have good

opportunities to progress and flourish.

- Pupils say there is no bullying. An examination of school records confirms that bullying is rare and, when it does happen, is very well dealt with so that there are no recurrences involving the same people.
- Opportunities to promote pupils' personal development are improving rapidly. They include taking on school responsibilities and looking after younger pupils. Groups of pupils are becoming much more involved with the local community and raising money for local and national charities.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Attendance has improved rapidly and significantly. Last year, attendance was broadly average. Currently, it is better than that. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has plummeted to single figures. Half have specific medical needs. Staff have worked extremely hard to achieve this improvement. There are many schemes and activities to promote good attendance. However, the most influential factors in improving attendance have been improving the quality of teaching and creating a school that pupils want to attend.
- Pupils are very proud of the school that Netherhall has become. They are keen to look smart in their new uniforms. There is an excellent atmosphere around the school where visitors are welcomed. Pupils show courtesy and respect to other pupils and adults alike.
- There is virtually no misbehaviour in class because pupils now enjoy and place great value in their work. Mostly, pupils' books and files demonstrate the pride they take in their learning. Pupils are careful about the presentation of their work. Most follow their teachers' guidance diligently.
- There are a number of pupils who do not naturally behave well. Staff manage the behaviour of these pupils very well because they know them individually and all teachers know how to encourage every pupil to behave well in this busy working environment.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to their learning are having a considerable impact on improving progress throughout the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Results in 2016 were poor and below the minimum standards set by the Department for Education (DfE). Despite results improving significantly for 2017 leavers, pupils still left with below average achievement. Current Year 11 pupils are making good progress. This is particularly so in mathematics, science, vocational subjects, art and religious education. Although progress in English is not quite as strong, it is broadly average. The progress of pupils in Years 9 and 10 is stronger than in the current Year 11 because the curriculum better meets their needs and these pupils have had less weak teaching early on in their secondary school education. They have less catching up to do.

- At the last inspection, the progress of most-able pupils was identified as of particular concern. Now, the progress of most-able pupils is broadly good. In addition, the current progress of middle- and low-attaining pupils is also good.
- As achievement has improved for all pupils, achievement has also improved for disadvantaged pupils, but at a slightly faster rate. There is still a difference in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school, but this difference is beginning to diminish.
- In Year 11, girls are already making solidly good progress. Teachers are aware that boys generally have more to do before their GCSE examinations if they are to reach their target grades. This is particularly evident in English. Although this gender difference exists in other years, it is smaller. Overall, boys are making good progress.
- The extensive additional provision introduced to improve pupils' reading and literacy skills is helping the majority of pupils. Pupils are beginning show pride in their improving reading and writing skills. Their rapidly improving confidence is enabling them to tackle more challenging work across all of their subjects. There is a small number of pupils whose improvement in these areas is not improving rapidly. Leaders are aware but have yet to implement different strategies to support these few pupils.
- As the school improves, pupils are becoming better prepared for their next steps in education and employment. Their basic skills in literacy and numeracy are improving, academic results are improving and much more is being done to promote their personal development. Pupils are quickly developing the fundamental attributes that enable them to work effectively and harmoniously with other people.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Two years ago, the sustainability of the sixth form was questionable. There were very few students choosing to attend Netherhall for their post-16 education. The small number of students who completed vocational courses attained well. However, students studying academic courses tended not to do well. There was very little to promote students' wider learning, including their personal development, leadership skills and work experience. The current leader of the sixth form took up his post in January 2017. Students say the sixth form is now unrecognisable compared to its former self. The head of the sixth form's enthusiasm, dynamism and aspiration are infectious. He has been central to the very rapid rate of improvement. Students in Year 13 feel very grateful for the recent improvements. The curriculum is broad and the school tries to provide the right courses for all who join. Numbers of students on role are rising rapidly. This year, few are leaving courses before their natural conclusion.
- Enrichment activities are extensive and well attended. Almost all sixth-form students opt into the school's scheme to help key stage 3 pupils improve their reading. A large number take sports coaching awards. The Duke of Edinburgh scheme is very popular. Students take part in a wide range of cultural visits. They give up a lot of free time to charitable activities. Many, but not all, students have taken part in meaningful work experience. Planning is under way for all of Year 12 students to do a week of work experience in July.
- Relationships between students and staff are excellent. Students have considerable respect for their teachers because they believe their teachers are doing a great job.

Students say they receive very good guidance in how to choose and apply to universities, colleges and employers. Students' attitudes to their learning and contributing to the wider school are excellent. Their attendance and behaviour are good.

- The quality of teaching is improving, with teachers beginning to guide students' learning much more skilfully. Students are quickly learning how to manage their own workloads. Students engage well with other students when discussing their work and their ideas. There is an industrious atmosphere around the sixth form, both generally and within classes.
- Students have, for some time, made good progress in vocational subjects. Currently, results are improving, particularly in the academic subjects. Overall, the progress that current students make is good.
- The majority of Year 12 students who did not attain a strong pass in their English GCSE in Year 11 managed to do so when they resat this qualification last November. Resits in mathematics were less successful. However, all such students are being well taught and supported.

School details

Unique reference number	112382
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10040377

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 comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	613
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	73
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jan Clarke
Headteacher	David Tromans
Telephone number	01900 813434
Website	www.netherhall.cumbria.sch.uk
Email address	enquiries@netherhall.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 May 2016

Information about this school

- The headteacher started as acting headteacher in January 2016. This was four months before the last inspection. He became the substantive headteacher in September 2016. Since then, there have been considerable changes to both the structure and the personnel of the senior leadership team; three of the previous senior leadership team left and were replaced by a new deputy headteacher. Roles and responsibilities have been restructured.
- Since the last inspection, the school has been seeking to join an academy trust. Negotiations were well under way when the trust withdrew from the process.

- Due to the protracted processes surrounding the conversion of this school to an academy, the school has received very limited external support.
- Netherhall School is the only secondary school in the town of Maryport in West Cumbria.
- At the time of the inspection, one pupil had attended one week at the West Cumbria Learning Centre, the local pupil referral unit.
- The school did not meet the government floor standards set in 2016. The DfE has not yet set the standards for 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other leaders and managers. The lead inspector met with four members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils and talked to pupils during their breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors met with groups of teachers and also spoke to individual teachers.
- School documents were scrutinised, including safeguarding checks, information about pupils' achievement and records of checks on the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors considered three reports written by external agencies.
- Inspectors visited classrooms with leaders to speak with pupils, look at their books and observe their learning.
- The headteacher and other senior leaders were party to many of the inspection activities.
- Inspectors took account of the 165 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Neil Mackenzie, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Linda Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
Garry Stout	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Tull	Ofsted Inspector

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