

Wellfield School

North Road East, Wingate, County Durham TS28 5AX

Inspection dates

12–13 June 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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher is an experienced and skilful leader. She communicates high aspirations successfully to staff, pupils and parents.
- Governors are knowledgeable and committed to ensuring that all pupils achieve highly. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- In 2016/17, Year 11 pupils who left the school made above-average progress overall and in most subjects. Current pupils in all year groups are also making good progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to their peers in the school and better progress than others nationally.
- Exceptional leadership and high-quality teaching in mathematics lead to very strong pupil outcomes. Pupils are confident to apply their mathematical skills consistently well across the curriculum.
- The majority of pupils are very well behaved and polite. They demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning, try hard and show respect for adults and their peers alike.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are well supported in lessons and through specialist teaching. Pupils who are supported through the school's designated specialist provision for autism spectrum disorder make strong progress. They are well cared for and attend school regularly.
- Senior and subject leaders use robust systems for checking the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Consequently, teaching overall is good across the curriculum, although some variability remains within some subjects.
- Over time, pupils' progress has been weak in English and geography, particularly for boys. Sometimes the work set is not sufficiently challenging. Leaders have taken prompt action to address weaknesses, and the quality of teaching is improving rapidly in both subjects.
- The local authority provides effective support for the school when needed. For example, it assisted leaders in recruiting and training the recently appointed leader in English.
- A small proportion of pupils exhibit very challenging behaviour, and the number of fixed-term exclusions is currently high. However, leaders are increasingly effective in engaging these pupils in an appropriate curriculum.
- In 2016/17, pupils' attendance had improved and was in line with the national average. However, there has since been an increase in pupils' absence, including that of disadvantaged pupils, which leaders are addressing rigorously.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve pupils' outcomes in English and geography, particularly for boys, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have high expectations of what pupils can do and achieve
 - plan suitably challenging activities to meet pupils' needs
 - use time effectively in lessons so that pupils make good progress
 - check pupils' learning regularly during lessons.
- Embed strategies to reduce pupils' absence, including the absence of disadvantaged pupils.
- Reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions so that they are in line or below the national figure for all pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher's high aspirations have secured a culture of care, respect and high expectations. She communicates, relentlessly, her strong commitment to improving the life chances of all pupils. Pupils and staff are motivated to 'Go the extra mile', which is the school's motto. She has built positive relationships with the local community and strengthened the school's reputation. Pupil numbers are increasing as a result.
- The majority of parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, and sent free texts during the inspection agreed that the school is well led and managed. Several parents commented positively on the quality of their children's transition from primary school and the quality of support and teaching that their children receive at Wellfield.
- Leaders' school self-evaluation is accurate. They know what is working well and they plan appropriate actions to address any weaknesses. For example, they have tackled the poor results in English by recruiting an effective subject leadership team and providing additional training for teachers. Consequently, current pupils are making good progress in English.
- The senior leader with responsibility for improving the quality of teaching is a talented teacher and leader. She has given teachers clear guidance on the standards expected and introduced a number of successful strategies to improve teachers' planning and assessment.
- Senior and subject leaders deliver relevant training for staff, which they value highly. Teachers also benefit from working collaboratively with teachers in other schools. Consequently, the quality of teaching is good overall, and where weaknesses remain they are being tackled rigorously.
- Leaders have recently reviewed the curriculum so that it is varied and challenging. Pupils are offered a wide range of subjects, including vocational subjects. Different pathways provide guidance for pupils so that they study appropriate courses for their ability and future career aspirations.
- The range of extra-curricular opportunities offered to pupils is impressive. Pupils value these opportunities. They recognise how well their social skills and leadership skills are developing as a result of their participation in educational visits and lunchtime clubs.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. A series of assemblies and tutorials cover a wide range of topics which encourage pupils to debate local and national issues. Periodically, the curriculum is suspended and 'Enthuse' days enable pupils to focus on exploring issues which affect the wider community, often supported by external visitors to the school. Pupils said that they enjoyed the 'Enthuse' days because they work with different pupils and find the variety of topics interesting. For example, they learn about democracy, gender equality and the importance of valuing diversity. They also discuss international topics such as 'fair trade'.
- The school's work to support the progress of disadvantaged pupils is good. Teachers actively consider the needs of disadvantaged pupils when planning learning activities. Additional funding is used well to support pupils who need to improve their basic skills

of literacy or numeracy. Funding is also used to raise pupils' aspirations, to enable them to visit universities and local businesses and be given additional careers guidance. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils make good progress across a range of subjects and year groups.

- Leaders' work to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is effective. Leaders have a thorough understanding of the individual needs of pupils. They have developed a range of interventions to remove their barriers to learning. For example, teachers and other adults provide well-designed resources which help pupils to make good progress in lessons. Pupils also benefit from additional, specialist teaching, for example in phonics.
- Pupils who are part of the school's specialist provision for autism spectrum disorder receive effective support both in the main school and in the 'Hub'. The 'Hub' is an on-site facility where pupils can go during social times and when receiving additional intervention, such as homework support or relaxation therapy.
- The additional funding that the school receives to help pupils in Year 7 to catch up if they are falling behind in English and mathematics has been spent appropriately on literacy and numeracy programmes. Since joining the school, most of these pupils have made more rapid gains in their reading and mathematical skills.
- Leaders are fully aware that improving pupils' attendance and reducing the number of fixed-term exclusions are priorities. Recent appointments have been made to give the pastoral team more capacity to engage with pupils and parents. Early signs show that new strategies are working. The attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is improving, and the number of these pupils who are regularly absent from school is also reducing. Nevertheless, pupils' attendance overall is currently below average.
- Leaders are committed to reducing the number of pupils who are excluded from school for a fixed period of time. Recent changes in the leadership of pupils' behaviour have led to a full review of the school's procedures for managing those who exhibit very challenging behaviour. A range of strategies are beginning to have a positive impact, such as an increased use of external agency support, changes to individual pupils' curricula and clear boundaries which are consistently applied. Currently, the proportion of fixed-term exclusions is high, but there are early signs that these are reducing this term.

Governance of the school

- Governors are very committed to the school. They undertake relevant training and have a broad range of expertise which enables them to carry out their different responsibilities and to challenge leaders effectively.
- Governors make regular checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that they have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. For example, they make sure that weaknesses in teaching and leadership are tackled promptly, because they want to best for pupils in the school.
- Governors have a secure understanding of the way in which leaders use the additional funding, including the pupil premium funding and the funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They check that these pupils are making good progress, and

acknowledge that there is more to do to ensure that all disadvantaged pupils attend school regularly.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All relevant checks are completed on the suitability of adults to work with young people. Governors check that records are maintained accurately.
- School staff are very clear about their responsibility for safeguarding pupils. They receive regular training and updates, including in the 'Prevent' duty. They know how to report concerns and are vigilant in checking for signs of abuse or distress.
- The designated safeguarding leader is experienced and keeps detailed records of any concerns and individual cases. She makes prompt referrals to external agencies when appropriate, for example when families need support or pupils need additional care. She is ably supported by a team of trained staff who look after the pupils' welfare.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including how to keep themselves safe online and what to do if they experience any bullying. Topics are well covered in the curriculum and pupils are confident to discuss issues in tutorials. Vulnerable pupils are particularly well cared for, including pupils in local authority care.
- Leaders are vigilant in keeping safe the pupils who are absent from school or attending off-site provision. Safeguarding checks on alternative providers are rigorous. Regular communication between school and home, and between school leaders and the adults who organise off-site placements, ensures that pupils are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching in mathematics is particularly strong, because the subject leader is inspirational. She has developed a team of specialist teachers who are keen to learn from each other in the pursuit of excellence. Pupils enjoy mathematics and demonstrate a high level of confidence when tackling new concepts. Pupils know how to improve in mathematics, because teachers check pupils' understanding carefully and quickly address any misconceptions during lessons. Teachers provide pupils with lots of opportunities to explain their reasoning and to apply their mathematical skills in problem-solving activities.
- Most teachers use questioning skilfully to engage pupils in their learning. Where teaching is most effective, teachers challenge pupils to explore their ideas in more detail and to justify their opinions. Pupils listen attentively and respond constructively to other pupils' ideas. Most teachers challenge pupils to use subject-specific terminology accurately, and there is clear evidence in lessons of the school's focus on improving pupils' vocabulary.
- Across the curriculum, pupils know how to improve their work, because they are given sufficient time to reflect on their strengths and areas for improvement. They are also given helpful guidance on how to correct their mistakes and how to develop their writing skills. Teachers use examination criteria consistently well to help pupils to

understand what they need to do to make strong progress.

- Homework is used well, across the curriculum, to embed pupils' learning and to extend their knowledge of topics covered in class.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are taught well, both in lessons and in the 'Hub'. Teachers and teaching assistants adapt resources and tasks to enable these pupils to make good progress. Staff are well trained to identify the learning needs of individual pupils.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. Most teachers use this knowledge to plan activities carefully, taking account of pupils' prior understanding and skills. In a range of subjects, pupils are given challenging work which helps them to make good progress. This includes the most able pupils. However, leaders are aware that there are still some inconsistencies within subject areas, particularly in English and geography, where learning is sometimes too slow or the work set is not challenging enough.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school's motto, 'Go the extra mile', is evident in practice. Most pupils try hard to achieve high standards, and their attitudes to learning are very positive. They take pride in their work and in their appearance. They are keen to contribute in lessons and to help other pupils to achieve. They are also confident to ask questions when they are unsure about what to do.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next steps when they leave school, because they receive effective impartial careers advice and guidance. The programme is well planned for each year group and addresses a broad range of career choices and pathways. Pupils are given useful information about the choices available to them, including further and higher education, apprenticeships and employment. Pupils said that they enjoy the careers fair because they can talk to representatives from local businesses. The proportions of pupils continuing in education and training are now average, having been lower in previous years.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors showed a secure understanding of the risks and potential dangers that they could face, locally and nationally. For example, they show an understanding of extremism, crime, online safety and how to keep themselves healthy.
- Pupils said that they are confident that bullying is managed effectively in the school. They know who to go to when they have concerns. Incidents of racist or homophobic bullying, recorded by the school, are dealt with severely, and pupils understand that such behaviour will not be tolerated.
- The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said that their children are safe, and the pupils agree.
- The small number of pupils who attend alternative provision off-site, for all or part of their timetable, are well cared for. Their attendance at their placements and in school

is improving, because they are engaged in their learning and the provision meets their needs and interests.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Relationships between pupils and their teachers are very strong. Pupils show a high level of respect towards each other and towards adults. They listen attentively to each other's ideas and opinions.
- Pupils conduct themselves exceptionally well around the calm and orderly school site. They are polite to visitors and keen to tell them about their pride in their school. Pupils are punctual to lessons, and any lateness to school is dealt with appropriately.
- Incidents of poor behaviour in lessons are rare. Pupils said that they are clear about the school's high expectations and that teachers apply the school's behaviour policy consistently. However, on occasions, when learning activities are not sufficiently challenging, a few pupils engage in off-task talking.
- One consequence of the school's high expectations of behaviour is that the numbers of fixed-term exclusions are high. Some pupils exhibit very challenging behaviour, particularly pupils who arrive in the school later in the academic year and take time to settle into their new school's expectations. Leaders are taking action to integrate these pupils more effectively than in the past. They track pupils' behaviour closely, seek support from external agencies, where necessary, and make sure that the curriculum is relevant and appropriate.
- Pupils' attendance was average last year, with a marked improvement in the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. However, since September, attendance overall has 'dipped'. In assemblies and tutorials, for example, leaders actively promote good attendance. They analyse attendance carefully and communicate promptly with the families of pupils who do not attend regularly. Leaders are committed to improving attendance again and reducing the proportion of pupils who are frequently absent.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Published outcomes for 2017 showed that pupils who left at the end of Year 11 made progress that was above national averages across a range of subjects. This included pupils from all starting points, including the most able pupils.
- The school's assessment and tracking systems are robust. Leaders ensure that the school's assessment of current pupils' progress is reliable by moderating teachers' assessments. Teachers also collaborate with other schools to ensure that assessments are accurate.
- The school's performance information shows that current pupils are also making good progress across subjects and year groups. Pupils in key stage 3 are making stronger progress than in the past, because the curriculum is more challenging.
- In 2017, disadvantaged pupils made similar progress to their peers in the school and

better than average progress compared to other pupils nationally. This is also the case for current pupils. The disadvantaged pupils who are not on track to meet their targets receive appropriate support and intervention.

- In 2017, pupils from all starting points made progress in mathematics which was well above the national average. Current pupils continue to make very strong progress in mathematics, because they are continually challenged to apply their mathematical skills and to develop their reasoning.
- In 2017, the small number of pupils who took a GCSE examination in languages made weak progress. However, current pupils are making stronger progress in both French and German. Pupils now study their chosen language over five years and teachers' planning is more rigorous. Evidence in pupils' books shows that pupils are increasingly confident in applying their speaking and writing skills in the target language.
- In 2017, pupils' progress in English and geography was well below average. Over time in these subjects, pupils had received teaching of variable quality. Now, evidence in pupils' books shows that, from all starting points and in all year groups, pupils' progress in English is improving rapidly. Nevertheless, girls continue to make better progress than boys. Consequently, reducing this gap continues to be an area for improvement. In geography, pupils' progress is also improving.
- Leaders and teachers promote literacy well. Teachers apply the school's policy for correcting pupils' spelling consistently. Pupils have ample opportunity to develop their writing skills across subjects. The daily designated 'reading time' encourages pupils to enjoy reading. However, some teachers do not check closely enough that all pupils are reading books which are challenging and appropriate for their ability and interests.
- The progress of current pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is improving, because teachers have an increasing understanding of how to adapt tasks and resources to meet their needs.
- Pupils supported in the 'Hub' for autism spectrum disorder make at least as strong progress as others, because they are well supported in mainstream lessons and the teaching assistants know them well. Specialist staff are skilled in developing these pupils' learning and emotional well-being.
- The small number of pupils who follow an alternative pathway or provision off-site are improving their literacy and numeracy skills while taking appropriate qualifications.

School details

Unique reference number	114315
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10037745

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	656
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Heather Anderson
Headteacher	Linda Rodham
Telephone number	01429 838783
Website	www.wellfieldschool.net
Email address	l.willis@wellfieldschool.net
Date of previous inspection	13–14 March 2014

Information about this school

- Wellfield School is smaller than average, but the numbers of pupils joining in Year 7 is increasing year on year. The school's motto, 'Go the extra mile', permeates throughout the work of the school.
- The school provides support to other schools in leadership, modern foreign languages and mathematics.
- Most the school's pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school has a higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below average. The number supported by an education, health and care plan is well above average.
- The school has a designated specialist provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. There are nine pupils on roll in this provision. Most of these pupils are educated in mainstream lessons, but also receive additional support, teaching and

therapy in the school's 'Hub'.

- A small number of pupils attend alternative, off-site provision with one or more of the following providers: Pinnacle, Education Plus and the local authority's 'virtual school' for children looked after.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a range of lessons across year groups and subject areas. Some of the observations in lessons were carried out with senior leaders from the school.
- Meetings were held with senior and subject leaders, teachers and governors.
- Inspectors spoke, on the telephone, to a local authority representative and leaders in off-site provision.
- Inspectors held informal and formal discussions with pupils, observed pupils in their tutorial and reading groups and observed pupils during social times.
- Inspectors listened to a group of pupils read.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation, plans for improvement, analyses of pupil performance, attendance and behaviour records and safeguarding files.
- Examples of pupils' books were looked at in detail. This included pupils of different abilities and year groups.
- Inspectors took account of 83 responses from parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 28 free text responses from parents. Thirty-six members of staff completed Ofsted's online staff questionnaire. Eleven pupils responded to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lynn Kenworthy, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Louise Greatrex	Ofsted Inspector
Jim McGrath	Ofsted Inspector

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