



WHITLEY BAY HIGH SCHOOL

CANDIDATE INFORMATION

Whitley Bay High School is a mixed 13-18 comprehensive school. The school has grown considerably in size over the last decade, and is oversubscribed each year. Currently the roll is 1844, with 676 in the Sixth Form. There are 181 members of staff, 109 Teaching and 72 Support staff.

We moved into our new school in September 2023 which has been built on the same site as the old school. This has provided Whitley Bay High School with state-of-the-art facilities for our students, staff and the wider community.

Key milestones in the school's history have included the award of Leading-Edge Status, one of the first 100 schools nationally to achieve this status, and the successful bid for Specialist College Status, which took effect from September 2006. More recently the school became one of the country's first Teaching Schools and became a National Support School in 2011. Both of these accolades emphasise our role at the forefront of research and practice in Teaching and Learning over many years.

In 2018, we were successful in securing a DFE grant to research how we could reduce the time teachers spend on planning as part of the National workload agenda. As a result of this, departments routinely work together to share planning which produces high quality lessons in less time. At the end of the project, 95% of teachers felt that the quality of lessons had improved and 85% believed this was done in less time. Another important conclusion was that 95% believed that teamwork in departments had improved still further; therefore, if successful, you would be part of a highly skilled and cohesive team.

We had our latest Ofsted inspection in June 2024 where we were rated outstanding in all areas. The opening sentence of the Ofsted report sums up the school: "Pupils thrive in this school as a result of an exceptional quality of education and an excellent programme of personal development."

The report goes on to say:

- "There is a powerful sense of community at the school."
- "Behaviour in and around the school is exemplary."
- "This calm, safe and inclusive atmosphere is founded on extremely strong and supportive relationships at all levels."
- "Staff enjoy working at this school and are immensely proud to do so."

At Whitley Bay High School, teaching and learning is our number one priority. We are proud of a culture in which both staff and students demonstrate a genuine love of learning, where curiosity, reflection and continuous improvement are valued by everyone. Staff voice consistently identifies professional development as one of the school's greatest strengths, reflecting our belief that investing in our people is the most effective way to improve outcomes for our students.

Every Tuesday during Period 5, all teaching and support staff participate in a dedicated programme of professional learning, complemented by a structured induction and development pathway for new colleagues. Our approach is highly collaborative and creates opportunities for staff both to lead and to participate in professional development, sharing expertise and learning from one another. Our programme is informed by the best available evidence, including the Education Endowment Foundation's guidance on effective professional development, Mary Myatt's work on curriculum excellence and high challenge, and Graham Nuthall's *The Hidden Lives of Learners*, which explores the relationship between research, practice and the classroom dynamic, alongside established principles of effective teaching and learning. We believe in finding an effective balance between Rosenshine's *Principles of Instruction* and the collaborative learning structures we have embedded, inspired by the work of Spencer Kagan and Mike Hughes. The focus is always on translating evidence into impactful classroom practice.

This sustained commitment to professional learning was recognised by Ofsted in 2024, which noted that "teaching is precise and engaging" and that the school has "invested time for teachers to train and plan collaboratively." The school also operates a shared planning initiative, stemming from research on workload and wellbeing conducted on behalf of the Department for Education. Through this culture of collaboration, evidence-informed practice and shared professional growth, we ensure that staff development has a direct and lasting impact on the quality of education our students receive.

Staff feedback is very positive, in the most recent staff survey (Summer 2026) where 161 staff responded 100% of staff agreed:

- I am proud to be a member of staff at this school
- Behaviour is good at this school
- The school makes appropriate provision for my training and professional development
- The school is well led and managed
- I know what we are trying to achieve at this school

Indeed, all the other questions received a 98% approval rating with one at 97%. This reflects a staff who believe strongly in the ethos and approach of the school

There is a strong culture of professional self-improvement, and it is important to emphasise that this has developed because staff here enjoy working together, sharing ideas and regularly reminding themselves that teaching children is an exciting and stimulating activity. Students are at the heart of all we do at the school, and building positive relationships is central to our purpose.

The ethos of the school is one which focuses constantly on the learning process. Staff, as well as students, consider themselves as learners and we very successfully include parents in this culture through the use of parental workshops. The emphasis is on high expectations through good relationships, and the use of praise and reward. What is happening in the classroom is the key to all our work. Lessons are planned and evaluated to provide a variety of learning opportunities for students, as well as highlighting the development of transferable skills.

Our teaching observation gallery allows us to continue to develop our practice further and is a highly effective part of our process for supporting staff. Several years ago, the gallery won national recognition for innovative practice at the annual Leading-Edge Conference in London. The new school build also has an observation gallery because we recognised how important this was in relation to staff development.

Examination performance is consistently high by all measures. Our school attainment and progress scores for a number of years has been significantly above average. What is most pleasing is the school consistently achieves high levels of performance across all subject areas. This makes us one of the highest performing schools in the country.

Our 2026 GCSE results were excellent and reflect the consistent outstanding performance of our students year on year. 81% of our students achieved 9–4 grades in both English and Mathematics. 83% of all grades across all subjects were 9-4.

Similarly, at 'A' level, students continue to perform highly with over 86% of students achieving A*-C grades and 65% of all grades were A*-B. Our average grade was a B, which places us as one of the highest performing Sixth Forms in the country. Our average Applied General grade was distinction. These results are reflected in the destinations of Sixth Formers – in 2026, 227 students went on to degree courses in Higher Education with over 90% securing their first or second choice university destination and 46% of students went on to Russell Group Universities. A further 56 students were equally successful in securing advanced apprenticeships, employment, taking GAP years or attending college courses.

The size and success of our Sixth Form is one of the distinguishing features of the school and it is regularly rated as one of the best Sixth Forms in the country by the National Press. Each year between 60- 65% of Year 11 choose to stay on into the Sixth Form with around 100+ students joining from other schools. Our aim is to continue to provide a fully comprehensive education, which caters for their varying needs. Sixth Form courses currently offered include 25 AS/A2 Level subjects. Our Post 16 curriculum also includes 5 Level 3 Certificates in Health and Social Care, Applied Business, ICT, Food and Nutrition and Sport Studies. Sixth Form students have access to a wide-ranging enrichment programme in Years 12 and 13. The significant number of students join the Sixth Form from other local schools as a consequence of its outstanding reputation.

The pastoral system is very important in developing the ethos of the school and is based on a year structure made up of tutor groups of about 24 students, each team led by a teaching Head of Year and two Assistant Heads of Year. All subject teachers in the school are responsible for a tutor group. Tutor teams work within a structured programme of guidance and support, and Heads of Year and tutors are the key figures for monitoring and raising student achievement, for contact with their homes, and for supporting them throughout their studies.

Much work has developed in recent years to take forward the personalisation of learning. This is particularly evident in the work of the Alternative Education Provision Team who plan and provide a wide ranging and diverse curriculum provision, some of it vocationally based off site, much of it provided in house. All of this contributes substantially to our whole school Raising Achievement Strategy which concentrates on improving the quality of learning and personal development of all students.

Students lead very busy lives at this school, and we offer a very wide range of extracurricular activities. Large numbers are involved in a whole variety of sports, from early morning clubs, to after school activities, matches and national competitions. Music, Drama and Art thrive at Whitley Bay High School. Recent productions include 'Romeo and Juliet', 'Miss Saigon', 'Grease', 'Back to the 80s', 'Oliver', 'Into the Woods', 'Beauty and the Beast' and 'The Little Shop of Horrors'. There are frequent concerts involving choir, wind band, strings groups and contemporary bands. Educational visits and foreign trips are numerous (Art and Media to New York, History to Berlin, Geography to Iceland, MFL to France, Germany & Spain, Applied Studies to Rome, Computer Science to San Francisco and Physics to the CERN for example). Twice, we became the National

Champions in the UK Bar Mock Trial competition, and this is one of many very popular activities led by staff, reflecting the wide-ranging interests of staff and students.

The school library is at the centre of school life and has a hugely positive impact on learning and teaching. Amongst many activities it runs a Christmas Lectures week and a weeklong Literature and Performing Arts Festival every summer. Staff give generously of their time and all who join the staff are expected to contribute to the wider life of the school, which is at the heart of the good relationships referred to earlier.

The school benefits from a very committed and forward-looking Governing Body, and Governors take a keen interest (and usually are involved) in staff appointments. Much of the work of the Governing Body is done in its three Committees, and staff and students are often invited to meetings to make their views known.

In conclusion, Whitley Bay High School has an outstanding reputation both in the North East and nationally. The school prides itself on positive relationships and its relaxed but purposeful atmosphere. It is in the middle of exciting and extensive continuing development, and new appointments will have an important part to play in this.