

Acklam Grange School

Lodore Grove, Middlesbrough, North Yorkshire TS5 8PB

Inspection dates	2–3 February 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders are relentless in building a culture of high aspiration that informs all aspects of the school's work.
- Senior leaders and governors act strongly to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by supporting teachers to improve their practice and by boldly tackling ineffective teaching. As a result, standards are improving.
- The quality of leadership across the school is outstanding and highly effective quality assurance processes are improving provision and outcomes.
- As a result of stronger leadership and better quality teaching, outcomes for pupils are good and improving.
- Through closer monitoring, stronger support and improving teaching, disadvantaged pupils are making better progress.
- Initiatives such as the school's own alternative education provision and integrated pupil support services are meeting the individual needs of pupils and helping them to achieve better outcomes while reinforcing good behaviour.
- The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective. Staff promote a culture of safety alongside values of tolerance and mutual respect that prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- The school works actively and reflectively with external partners to continually improve teaching and outcomes.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The curriculum is not providing sufficient challenge for all pupils.
- Gaps are narrowing but still exist in the achievement of some groups of pupils.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving but some variability still exists between key stages and subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further strengthen the curriculum to increase challenge for pupils, leading to rising standards for all groups by:
 - refining curriculum pathways so that they meet the needs of all pupils and enable them to follow courses that provide an appropriate level of challenge
 - continuing to strengthen the curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 3, so that all pupils can make good progress and achieve better outcomes.

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that the very best practice is shared and helps to improve standards across the school by:
 - enabling teachers to combine their thorough planning with the ability to adapt teaching to meet the emerging needs of pupils in lessons
 - improving assessment practices so that teachers focus on those areas for improvement that will have the most significant impact on pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher and governors are relentless in their drive to improve standards. They have acted vigorously to address areas for improvement since the last inspection and their actions are leading to rapid improvement. The headteacher's intolerance of underperformance is reflected in a firmer application of performance management systems, and this has resulted in increased staff turnover. However, leaders have been equally as energetic in developing teaching through high-quality teacher support programmes.
- The headteacher and governors are extremely astute in their recruitment of high-quality leaders and are willing to make brave decisions to ensure that leadership is continually strengthened. They have been intuitive and wise in securing some highly effective recent appointments that have proven valuable in supporting rapid improvement. Further ambitious appointments across the wider staff and leadership team have fortified leadership at all levels.
- The addition of new talent is complemented by the development of existing staff. Staff development has been hugely influential for the vast majority in improving provision and building staff morale. One teacher commented: 'Changes have been put in place to support both students and staff, enabling achievement to be improved and empowering us to believe that change is within our reach.'
- The systems to monitor pupils' progress and to check the quality of teaching are extremely rigorous. Assessment data is verified by scrutiny of pupils' work at faculty level and the accuracy of teachers' prediction is evaluated by comparing their forecasts with pupils' outcomes. Where gaps exist, training and support is improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The quality of middle leadership is strong and reflective of an exceptional collective workforce. Middle leaders fully embrace the direction set by senior leaders and value the support they have received from within and beyond the school to improve standards. Middle leaders are actively involved in the emerging curriculum design and their actions are already leading to improving outcomes.
- Senior leaders have actively embraced external partnerships to improve the quality of provision. The headteacher invited a team of four primary headteachers to review the quality of provision at Key Stage 3. This is prompting considerable curriculum redesign and adding challenge. The appointment of one of the primary headteachers to the governing body reflects the headteacher's ongoing commitment to deeply embedded improvement.
- A restructured, cohesive senior leadership is enabling leaders to more effectively meet the needs of pupils. A newly appointed pupil premium champion is monitoring the progress and support of disadvantaged pupils more rigorously. The alignment of academic and pastoral leadership to link the personal and emotional needs of pupils with their academic progress reflects well-considered leadership decisions. Innovations, such as the integrated pupil support services, are already improving the quality of care pupils receive, raising attendance and enhancing outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.
- Senior leaders have shown an ability to respond to educational change with vision and purpose. With the removal of national curriculum levels at Key Stage 3, they have embraced opportunities to develop new assessment systems that are contributing to increasingly good progress. The highly effective systems are already fuelling pupils' ambition and heightened progress.
- The launch of Acklam Grange Pride in 2015 is placing the spiritual, moral social and cultural development of pupils at the centre of the school's activities. The school has worked actively with local communities and used faith leaders as advisers on cultural and spiritual issues. The teaching of democracy is strong and is delivered through practical application of democratic systems. Personal, social and health education lessons are used for rigorous discussion and debate. The integration of different communities within the school is seamless and a result of high-quality leadership and partnership work.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors share the headteacher's high aspirations for the school. They have supported her in tackling ineffective teaching and building stronger leadership.
 - Governors are astute in recruiting high-quality staff. They have responded swiftly to opportunities to appoint talented leaders and their boldness is leading to a substantial improvement in leadership capacity that is already raising standards.
 - Governors have increasing expertise in education and finance. They ask challenging questions of leaders to heighten accountability for pupils' outcomes, especially those supported by the pupil premium funding. Performance management is used to hold teachers to account and pay progression is only considered when key teacher standards and performance targets are met.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school meets all statutory requirements for safeguarding. Leaders have established a robust safeguarding culture that places the welfare of children at the heart of the school. Staff are appropriately trained in child protection and on how to protect children from radicalisation. Pupils are taught sensitively but thoroughly about issues such as abuse and the importance of safe behaviours. Considerable action is taken to minimise risks to the most-vulnerable pupils. The cohesive nature of the school's care and support services means that pupils' welfare needs are a source of continual focus. Governors are involved in all safeguarding training and challenge staff on the impact of this training on pupils' safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The leadership of teaching and learning is strong. The close relationship between faculty monitoring and progress tracking ensures that swift and effective actions are put in place to improve teaching when areas of underperformance are identified. Lead practitioners and other colleagues are working with teachers to improve performance in the classroom through the deft use of support programmes. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving.
- There are clear links between improvements in teaching, learning and assessment and improving pupils' outcomes. For example, in mathematics lessons, inspectors saw consistent evidence of strong planning, clear explanations and probing questioning that has led to the ongoing improvements in this area. In art, pupils are willing to experiment with a range of media and artistic genres and talk articulately about the artists who influence their own creative decisions.
- The quality of teachers' planning is strong. Teachers universally use detailed information on pupils to inform their planning and match teaching to pupils' needs. This is contributing to improving levels of progress for all pupils and key groups.
- Teachers are using the new assessment system with increasing accuracy to increase pupils' progress. In many lessons, this feedback is helping pupils to improve the quality of their work. In English, pupils use teachers' guidance to improve their sentence composition and the use of adjectives for effect. Where feedback is less successful, teachers do not focus clearly enough on those areas for improvement that can have the most significant impact on pupils' progress.
- The quality of teaching in vocational subjects is strong. Well-organised programmes of study and clearly signposted assessment systems are contributing to purposeful work in lessons that is cemented by strong teacher-pupil relationships. Teachers adapt their teaching effectively to meet pupils' needs.
- The quality of teaching in the school's own alternative provision is good. In a lesson on navigation, pupils listened attentively to a demonstration before working within groups to apply techniques, where they observed one another and engaged in mutual cooperation.
- The ongoing partnership with primary colleagues is beginning to strengthen the Key Stage 3 curriculum but at present teaching in this phase is not as strong as in Key Stage 4. Where teaching is less effective, pupils are sometimes too passive when teachers do not adapt teaching to meet their emerging needs. On occasions, the over-exemplification of tasks by teachers limits pupils' engagement and their progress.
- The teaching of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is becoming more coherent and integrated into teachers' practice across the school. There was evidence of good reading activity in Year 7 tutorial periods and of pupils proofreading application letters in information and communication technology.
- Parents and pupils feel that appropriate homework is set to extend learning although leaders recognise that more could be done to use homework to drive progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. The school exercises its duty to keep pupils safe and promote their welfare with extremely high diligence. Pupils in all year groups can articulate how they can keep themselves safe. Incidents of bullying are rare and pupils are confident that staff act swiftly to address their concerns.
- Teachers work passionately to create a cohesive school community. There is a seamless integration of pupils from different ethnic groups. Teaching pre-emptively challenges narrow or prejudicial views that pupils may be exposed to outside of school and racist incidents are extremely rare. Close partnership

work with leaders from different faiths and communities is building a climate of trust and understanding that contributes to respectful relationships across the school. The wider outreach work with parents to establish a cohesive community built on shared values and expectations is extremely strong.

- Cohesive support systems mean that individual needs are addressed. The new ARC service aligns personal, emotional and academic support to closely address individual needs. Case studies show the strong impact of the talented pastoral team in raising the attendance and wider school engagement of many disaffected and vulnerable pupils, including some supported by the pupil premium funding.
- The extremely good quality of information and guidance pupils receive helps them in their future planning. Pupils receive regular insights into the world of work and further education and in January 2016, 38 businesses and educational organisations attended the AGS *Shine* event that enabled over 300 pupils to explore future pathways. As a sign of the success of the school's work in this area, almost 100 per cent of pupils in 2015 progressed to further education, employment or training.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is because pupils show confidence and pride in their school work and in their school. The standard of presentation in their work is good and demonstrates good commitment to learning.
- Pupils are punctual and attend lessons with the necessary equipment for them to make good advantage of learning opportunities. Figures for 2015 show a significant improvement in punctuality.
- The attendance of the majority of pupils has improved and is currently above the national average for 2015. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has also fallen significantly across the school and for key groups, including pupils supported by the pupil premium funding. The proactive work of behaviour leaders to work alongside pupils to modify their behaviour is reflected in the drastic reduction in fixed-term exclusions and the successful efforts to integrate pupils within the school community.
- Sometimes, the attitudes of a minority of pupils are not consistently positive towards their learning and this leads to a loss of engagement and purposefulness. This is most apparent in Key Stage 3 for pupils when teaching is not as well focused on the learning and skills.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Outcomes for pupils are improving across the school because the quality of teaching is now stronger. In the vast majority of subjects, pupils are achieving improved outcomes with results that match and often better those achieved nationally. The overall progress of pupils has significantly improved.
- Challenge and aspiration now permeate lessons. This has a strong impact upon progress, the rate of which is accelerating. More-able pupils are making much stronger progress at Key Stage 3. In 2015, the proportion of pupils achieving three grades at A*/A increased by nearly a third and overall progress for more-able pupils increased.
- The school has worked very successfully to improve outcomes for pupils in those areas that were identified as areas for improvement at the time of its last inspection. Attainment and progress in French, mathematics and science have all improved. Areas of significant underachievement have been eradicated through exceptional leadership and much better teaching.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is stronger because teaching is stronger. Rates of progress are now in line with those achieved by pupils nationally and current progress shows further improvement across both key stages. Although English Language results in 2015 were disappointing and are subject to an ongoing appeal, outcomes elsewhere in English are good. English Literature results in 2015 for the same cohort of pupils were highly impressive, while current progress for other year groups is strong.
- Improvement for different groups of pupils is showing a consistent shift in the right direction. Boys' progress is improving and the gender gap is closing. Gaps in the achievement of different groups of pupils are closing rapidly at Key Stage 3 and current progress for pupils in receipt of the pupil premium funding in Year 11 is better than that of those not in receipt of that funding. In 2015, pupils supported by the pupil premium achieved significantly higher value-added scores and narrowed the gaps between their achievement and that of their peers.
- The provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is now aligned to the new ARC services. There is emerging evidence that better tracking and support is improving outcomes for individual pupils and case studies show that their attendance is improving. This is building upon the improved outcomes for disabled pupils and special educational needs in 2015 when progress and attainment gaps narrowed.

- The quality of teaching and support for pupils who speak English as an additional language is improving as in 2015 they made stronger overall progress than those whose first language is English, although gaps were still apparent in English and mathematics. Current progress shows that these gaps are continuing to narrow, particularly in Year 7 and Year 9.

School details

Unique reference number	111751
Local authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	10002092

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1404
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeff Taylor
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Andrea Crawshaw
Telephone number	01642 277700
Website	www.acklamgrange.org.uk
Email address	acklamgrange@acklamgrange.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 December 2013

Information about this school

- Acklam Grange is a larger than average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- The school meets the government’s current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils’ attainment and progress.
- The school runs its own offsite alternative education provision, Resolution, for some students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 54 part-lessons, a number of which were observed jointly with members of the leadership team. Inspectors carried out scrutinies of pupils' work with leaders and looked at pupils' work in their visits to classrooms.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, and wider groups of staff, both teaching and non-teaching. Discussions were also held with the Chair of the Governing Body and a number of other governors. Telephone conversations were held with external partners, including the local authority's senior secondary school improvement partner and a primary headteacher and governor who had a leading role in the recent peer review of Key Stage 3 teaching.
- Inspectors spoke formally to pupils in a series of meetings and informally in lessons and around the school.
- The inspection team looked at documents provided by the school, including: the school's self-evaluation and its development plan; safeguarding documents and those relating to attendance and behaviour; pupils' progress information and records of the monitoring of teaching and learning.
- A visit was made to the school's own alternative education provision, Resolution, where inspectors observed lessons and talked to pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors took into account 29 responses to the online Parent View Questionnaire, 10 responses to the online pupils' questionnaire and 60 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

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