

Consett Academy

Ashdale Road, Consett, County Durham DH8 6LZ

Inspection dates

16–17 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

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| 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 | Requires improvement |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Consett Academy has improved quickly since the last inspection to the extent that all groups of pupils are now making good progress.
- The move to the new single site in September 2015 has been managed well to ensure that pupils' achievement has continued to improve.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has risen substantially.
- The school has a good tracking system which enables managers to see how much progress pupils are making.
- The effective 16 to 19 study programmes enable learners to gain above-average results in AS- and A-level examinations.
- Good leadership of the programmes ensures that there is effective advice for learners and that their personal development is good.
- Outstanding arrangements for ensuring pupils' health, safety and welfare mean that they benefit from excellent personal support.
- Pupils think highly of their school and speak very positively about the quality of support and help they receive from teachers and classroom assistants.
- Pupils take pride in their appearance and conduct themselves in a mature and sensible manner in lessons and around the school.
- Parents are positive about the quality of education that the school provides.
- The Principal, governors and leaders at all levels work effectively to ensure that achievement and teaching continue to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are still a few lessons where the pace of learning is too slow.
- In some subjects, the marking of work does not always identify major errors that pupils have made.
- There is still more scope for teachers and their assistants to share and therefore extend the best and most innovative classroom practice across the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide pupils in all year groups, and learners on the 16 to 19 programmes, with teaching that is consistently good and more frequently outstanding by:
 - improving the pace of learning in the small minority of lessons where it is less than good
 - replicating the school's most innovative and exemplary classroom practice across all subjects
 - ensuring that marking meets the school's best practice and identifies major errors in pupils' work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The very effective leadership of the Principal and his senior team has ensured that the school has improved substantially since the last inspection. Teaching, achievement and the quality of provision in the 16 to 19 study programmes are all much better than they were just over two years ago.
- Staff morale is excellent.
- The school has very effective methods for measuring how it is doing and for setting an agenda for continuously raising the quality of education that it provides for its pupils. In this respect it frequently draws on the expertise of officers from the New College Durham Academies Trust. There is no room for complacency. Any weak teaching or slippage in pupils' progress is tackled effectively when identified. Nevertheless, there are still lessons where pupils make only slow progress.
- The enthusiastic and capable middle leaders play their part in ensuring that the school continues to improve. They manage their subjects well and effectively assist the senior team in ensuring that the school meets its challenging targets.
- Effective management of teaching by senior and middle managers means that achievement continues to rise. Performance management arrangements are good and so pay is firmly linked to responsibility and the progress that pupils make. However, there is still considerable scope for leaders to further develop the use of the school's most successful teaching to demonstrate how to generate very rapid progress during a lesson.
- Outstanding welfare arrangements mean that equal opportunities are promoted very strongly. In treating all pupils as individuals with differing needs, the school ensures that all groups do well. A recent emphasis on most-able pupils' progress has considerably raised their attainment levels. Good provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability means that they are supported very well. Very good use of pupil premium funding for extra support has ensured that the gap in performance between disadvantaged and other pupils continues to close.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strongly supported and skilfully embedded into the curriculum, which enables pupils to make good academic progress and strong personal gains. A well-structured careers programme enables pupils to have a clear understanding of the options that are available to them after GCSE and A level. There is plenty of opportunity for pupils to benefit from the many extra-curricular activities that take place after lessons. Teachers provide plenty of opportunity for them to be ready to take their places as citizens of modern Britain through discussion of topics such as democracy, dictatorship and why and how radicalisation occurs in our society.
- The online parental questionnaire indicates a high level of satisfaction with the quality of education that the school provides.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance of the school is a strong feature. Governors, who include members of the sponsoring trust, are knowledgeable about the progress that pupils make and the strengths and weaknesses in subject examination results at GCSE, AS and A level. They very effectively hold leaders to account for the quality of education that the school provides through productive links between themselves and the different aspects of its work.
 - They are passionate about their vision for more Consett pupils having the opportunity to go to university.
 - Governors provide valuable support and challenge to the school when appropriate. They ensure that performance management arrangements are effective and that salary progressions are fully merited. They focus clearly on the way that the school spends its pupil premium funding and always want to know how effective it is in closing performance gaps.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective because there are exemplary systems in place, which staff implement consistently. An example is the way that many adults are always on hand to help and assist pupils at breaks and lunchtimes. Another is the impeccable record keeping on all safeguarding matters and the way that the school links up with outside professional agencies when appropriate.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching and learning is much better than it was at the time of the previous inspection.
- Teaching is mostly of good or better quality and underpins the rising levels of achievement for all groups of pupils in the school. However, there are still some instances where teaching is only enabling pupils to progress rather slowly. This tends to be when teachers do not notice that pupils are off-task or when expectations of them are too low.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide lessons that generally challenge pupils of all abilities well. They have high expectations of their pupils both in terms of conduct and academic progress.
- Typically, teachers manage their classes well, make lesson objectives clear and check effectively to ensure that pupils are progressing well. The questioning of pupils to establish how much they have understood is much improved. Some teachers extend their questioning to really make pupils think and to extend their learning and understanding. Sometimes questioning tends to stop when it has established that pupils have understood the work covered up to that point.
- Good approaches to support pupils who have special educational needs or disability enable them to progress well too. Teachers plan lessons that challenge them and also enable them to experience success, often with the support of skilled classroom assistants.
- Some of the learning takes place at an extremely rapid rate, for example in art, and this confirms that there is some outstanding teaching in the school.
- The school's robust tracking and assessment system shows that all groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs or disability, are making good progress.
- Teachers ensure that gaps in performance between disadvantaged and other pupils continue to diminish, often through the provision of extra tuition. Challenge for most-able pupils is much improved and now enables them to produce work of high quality, especially in Years 10 and 11. For example, in Year 11, a considerable proportion of pupils are producing work consistent with GCSE examination grades A and A*.
- Teachers generally follow the school's marking policy well so pupils know how to improve their work and extend their knowledge and understanding. However, there are still instances of weaker practice in computing, mathematics, science and technology. For example, there are times when graphs without titles or the labelling of axes are not challenged and pupils' folders in computing are not marked with the same rigour evident in the normal practice in other subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils become far more mature and self-assured as they move through the school from Year 7 to Year 11, and to the 16 to 19 programmes. Pupils are generally really eager to learn. They feel that teachers and their assistants know them exceptionally well and that they are always on hand to assist with any extra tuition, help or guidance.
- In this school there is exceptional and effective extra assistance for the young people whose circumstances have made them most vulnerable, those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs or disability.
- A very good range of extra-curricular activities enables pupils to develop additional skills, make new friends and generally become more confident.
- Outstanding levels of very visible supervision at breaks and lunchtimes mean that pupils feel safe and know that there is always an adult on hand. Pupils themselves say that they feel perfectly safe in the school, that they are treated fairly and that bullying is very rare. The school records support their view.
- Pupils confirm that the school teaches them about potential risks to their health and welfare and about all types of bullying. They know that the school will not tolerate homophobic or racist language. They know how to keep themselves safe from potential dangers posed by drugs, alcohol, unsuitable internet sites and radicalisation.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis with a clear code of conduct that all pupils understand and most adhere to fully. Pupils move sensibly between lessons with due regard for the safety and welfare of others.
- Behaviour in lessons is generally good and frequently outstanding. Pupils are keen to learn. They cooperate well with their teachers and classroom assistants whom they fully respect.
- In Years 10 and 11, and in the 16 to 19 study programmes, pupils demonstrate increasing maturity as they have learned how to sustain concentration for long periods. In class they are confident enough to approach staff and ask for help or clarification when they need it.
- There is very little poor conduct and so exclusions, although recently increased, are still lower than average.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision make good gains in personal development and benefit widely from small teaching groups. The school checks consistently to ensure that they behave just as well as other pupils.
- Pupils' attendance is average. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is also average but reducing as the school experiences more success in reaching some of the most disadvantaged pupils and encouraging them back into education.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- GCSE examination results in 2015 compared well with the national picture. An average proportion of pupils gained five GCSE results in the range A* to C, including English and mathematics. An above-average proportion gained five graded results. All groups of pupils made at least expected progress in English and mathematics. Higher-ability pupils matched the national average for making more than expected progress in English but not in mathematics. The school's highest attainment at GCSE was in English and physical education, and lowest in humanities. All pupils who took vocational courses at college passed them.
- Current progress data show that the current Year 11 pupils are on track to achieve above-average GCSE examination results, and that low-, middle- and high-ability pupils are progressing well in all year groups. Higher-ability pupils in Year 11 are doing particularly well in mathematics and handle topics, such as the manipulation of algebraic terms with fractional and negative indices, with confidence. Many are intending to continue with mathematics to AS and A level.
- In 2015, the GCSE examination results showed that for disadvantaged pupils the gap between their performance and that of other pupils in the school was a grade in English and over a grade in mathematics behind. Compared with other pupils nationally, the gap in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils was also around a grade behind. Performance data suggest that the gaps in performance in English and mathematics will partly close by the time that pupils take their GCSE examinations this year. In other year groups, gaps in performance between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school are much smaller because leaders have used pupil premium funding well to provide effective extra support.
- Pupils' work is generally extensive and presented well. Pupils can read well and know how to write at length for a variety of audiences by the time they reach Year 11. Some writing is particularly sophisticated. Previous underachievement in history and geography has been reversed. Pupils are now making good progress in these subjects but there is still some slow progress in religious studies.
- Where pupils join the school with below-average attainment in English and mathematics, the school provides good-quality teaching to enable them to catch up. By the time they reach Year 9, the pupils who had the weakest skills in mathematics in Year 7 can calculate areas of compound shapes including triangles. This shows that they have not only caught up but have also progressed well after that.
- An effective programme to support pupils who have special educational needs or disability enables them to make good progress across the curriculum. Pupils who attend college courses for vocational qualifications in motor vehicle maintenance, hairdressing and beauty are keen to explain what they have learned. Several can point to a route to college and future employment.
- Typically, pupils join Year 7 with attainment in English and mathematics that is broadly average or a little below that. The school is challenging them to reach above-average results at GCSE from 2016 onwards. Pupils in all year groups are currently on track to meet these targets.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- Numbers of learners on 16 to 19 study programmes are still relatively small as this aspect of the school's work continues to develop. Consequently, they often benefit from exceptionally small teaching groups.
- Leaders have very high expectations of learners. They have planned provision carefully and rigorously monitor learners' progress and the quality of teaching.
- Careful discussion and planning with learners ensures that they all have suitable personalised and sufficiently challenging programmes which build well on the foundations provided by GCSE courses.
- Learners without at least a GCSE at grade C in English or mathematics receive effective support to enable them to reach this level as soon as possible. All learners have at least adequate literacy and mathematical skills to access their chosen courses.
- Recent examination results at AS and A level have been above average and reflect the generally good progress that learners make.
- Comprehensive and impartial careers advice and guidance support learners in making choices about which subjects to study and future life pathways. Enrichment and extension activities, for example involving visiting speakers, help to expand horizons and raise aspirations.
- Good teaching generally serves learners well and enables them to make good progress. However, there is some variability in subject performance at AS and A level, and learners themselves say that they find some lessons to be more effective than others. They say that they learn more quickly when they have the opportunity to research and debate topics rather than when they just listen and take notes.
- Personal development and employability skills develop well through a focused and individualised programme of enhancement and work experience activities. Attendance is high and learners are keen to take every advantage of what is on offer. They contribute enthusiastically to the running of the school through the student council and by helping younger pupils, at the same time gaining valuable citizenship and leadership skills.
- Most learners complete their study programmes and many secure university places in their chosen subjects, often supported with considerable advice and guidance from their tutors.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 137638 |
| Local authority | Durham |
| Inspection number | 10002152 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary comprehensive |
| School category | Sponsored academy |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1,161 |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes | 83 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Karl Fairley |
| Principal | Kevin Reynolds |
| Telephone number | 01207 507001 |
| Website | www.consettacademy.org.uk |
| Email address | enquiries@consettacademy.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 26–27 November 2013 |

Information about this school

- Consett Academy is a larger than average-sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- The school is sponsored by the New College Durham Academies Trust.
- It moved to new accommodation on a single site in September 2015.
- Most pupils are White British.
- There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium is above the national average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The school meets the government’s current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils’ performance at GCSE.
- A small number of pupils, mostly in Years 10 and 11, attend the Green School or Delta Independent School full time for specialist support for personal and special educational needs.
- A further small group of pupils in Years 10 and 11 attends New College Durham or North Durham Academy for one or a half days each week to pursue vocational courses.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 lessons, including six observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of pupils' written work especially in Years 9, 11 and the 16 to 19 study programmes.
- They held meetings with the Principal, senior and middle leaders, the special needs coordinator, groups of pupils in Years 7, 9 and 11, learners on the 16 to 19 study programmes, and representatives of the governing body and the New College Durham Academies Trust.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's review of its performance, development planning, records of pupils' progress, safeguarding procedures and incident logs.
- They took account of 91 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 28 responses to the staff questionnaire and 33 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
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| Nigel Drew | Ofsted Inspector |
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