

Haughton Academy

Salters Lane South, Darlington, County Durham DL1 2AN

Inspection dates

18–19 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' achievements are not high enough because too few make the progress they should, particularly in science and history.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as other pupils in the school or other pupils nationally.
- While teaching, learning and assessment are improving overall, there is still too much inconsistency in the expectations teachers have in different subject areas.
- Some teachers are not yet sufficiently skilled in providing activities that help pupils to learn well from their different starting points.
- A few teachers do not adjust their approach quickly enough when pupils' misconceptions become apparent in lessons.
- Behaviour has improved over the last year; however, low-level disruption still persists in some lessons.
- Too many pupils lack self-confidence and as a result give up too easily in lessons.
- The rate of pupils' attendance is below that seen nationally. Too many pupils are persistently absent.

The school has the following strengths

- The new principal is highly ambitious for all pupils and passionate about raising their achievement. Along with new senior leaders, he is raising the aspirations of pupils and staff. This is leading to significant improvement.
- Middle leaders are well motivated and determined. Many of them are new to their roles and they are making rapid progress in raising the quality of teaching.
- The school is an inclusive environment where all pupils are valued, respected and well looked after.
- Pupils attain well in English, media studies and religious education as a result of good teaching in these subjects.
- The governing body has recently been restructured. It is now providing a good level of challenge to senior leaders.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils' progress improves rapidly; especially in science and history and for disadvantaged pupils, by:
 - ensuring that all teachers have consistently high expectations in all subject areas so that no ceiling is placed on pupils' achievement
 - checking that all teachers are using assessment information about pupils' starting points to set tasks at the right level for them
 - giving teachers more opportunities to observe each other teaching so that they become more adept at spotting misconceptions during lessons and modifying their approaches accordingly.

- Improve behaviour and increase the proportion of pupils who attend regularly by:
 - ensuring that all teachers clearly set out the standard of behaviour expected and do not tolerate low-level disruption
 - working more closely with those families whose children do not attend school regularly
 - developing pupils' self-confidence and belief in their own abilities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since his appointment in September 2015, the new principal has worked relentlessly to transform the culture at the school. He has an uncompromising vision of high achievement for all pupils no matter what their background. He has quickly secured the support of a skilled senior team to bring about improvements in many aspects of the school's work. The quality of teaching has risen sharply and pupils are now making much better progress than in the past. Behaviour has also improved significantly.
- The chief executive of the Trust has provided strong support for the school through a period of turbulence in staffing.
- Leaders at all levels now expect high standards of behaviour in and around the school. They are energetic and visible around the school building and so, although behaviour is not yet good enough, there is a growing positive atmosphere.
- Senior leaders are able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of teaching accurately and develop ambitious improvement plans as part of a clear self-evaluation cycle. They place a high priority on raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and have a clear strategy for accelerating the progress of this group.
- Middle leaders, many of them new to the school, monitor the quality of teaching and learning closely. Regular analysis of assessment information helps them to form an accurate view of performance in their subject areas. Senior leaders hold them to account through review meetings. Consequently, senior leaders and governors now have a comprehensive understanding of the school's performance.
- The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding through a wide range of experiences. Pupils are offered a varied programme of extra-curricular activities including creative and sporting opportunities.
- Leaders keep the curriculum under close scrutiny and are continually looking for improvements. A new 'British values' scheme of work has been introduced into personal, social and health education lessons and so pupils are now learning about tolerance, democracy and the rule of law. Over time, the curriculum has not contributed strongly enough to pupils' progress but recent changes are ensuring that it now meets pupils' needs better.
- The close relationship with the special school on the same site contributes strongly to the positive, open school culture and directly helps pupils to value diversity. No discrimination of any kind is tolerated.
- A newly appointed leader for special educational needs and disability has quickly brought about better assessment of needs and better targeting of support. As a result, the progress of pupils who have special educational needs or disability has improved rapidly.
- Pastoral leaders are energetic in their pursuit of better attendance. Consequently, attendance rates are rising but leaders are rightly determined to accelerate this trend.
- Teachers are given many opportunities for professional development. For example, a coordinated action research programme is helping them improve their skills quickly. The vast majority of teachers feel trusted and valued and so they are well motivated and determined to raise standards.
- Senior leaders provide regular professional development activities for staff. For example, a coordinated action research programme is improving teachers' skills in the area of literacy and numeracy teaching.
- The majority of parents who responded to Parent View believe their child is happy at school, is well looked after and feels safe. More extensive feedback, gathered at parents' evenings, confirms this.
- **The governance of the school**
 - After the previous inspection there was a decline in standards at the school which the Education Village Academy Trust was slow to react to. However, since then the governance arrangements have been restructured. A new chief executive of the trust has been appointed and one local governing body, the Education Standards Committee, now takes specific responsibility for the school.
 - The chief executive of the trust has taken decisive action. Changes to leadership and management at all levels: principal, senior leadership and middle leadership, have brought about significant and rapid improvement at the school.
 - The trust has recruited highly skilled new members to the Education Standards Committee and this is now functioning well. Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Minutes of meetings show that they bring effective challenge to senior leaders. They are clear about the link between teachers' salary decisions and the quality of their teaching. They have supported the principal in making difficult decisions where teachers' performance has not been good enough.

- Governors have effective oversight of the use of pupil premium funding and they are now acutely aware of the need to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders promote a culture of vigilance throughout the school. Staff have received a range of training on the potential risks for young people including child sexual exploitation, cyber bullying and radicalisation. There are clear procedures in place which are known and used.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching is improving rapidly but it is not yet good because there is still too much variability between different subjects and classes. Teaching is not yet consistently good enough in science and history to make up for weaknesses in the past. Teachers' expectations are sometimes too low and in these cases this places a limit on pupils' achievement.
- Teachers do not always have sufficient awareness of the misconceptions that pupils develop during lessons.
- Senior leaders have put in place a reliable assessment system for checking the progress of pupils and most teachers are using this information well to plan suitable work for pupils of different abilities. However, such effective practice is not yet uniform. Senior leaders are aware of this and have effective plans in place to ensure greater consistency.
- The positive relationships that now exist between staff and pupils make a strong contribution to the learning that takes place in most lessons. However, where the expectations of pupils' conduct are not set out clearly enough, low-level disruption is allowed to hinder their progress.
- Where teaching is good or better teachers have a passion for their subject and use their expertise to enthuse pupils of all abilities and backgrounds. They involve pupils in their learning and as a result they make good progress. For example, in one Year 10 Spanish lesson the teacher inspired all pupils to extend and develop their sentences while learning about fiestas in Spanish culture.
- The most-able pupils are responding well to improved teaching and as a result they are now making good or better progress. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson about polygons, high-ability pupils were enthused by an investigative challenge and as a result deepened their understanding of interior and exterior angles.
- The majority of parents who responded to Parent View agree that their child is well taught.
- A whole-school initiative to develop literacy and numeracy is evident in lessons. Wall displays reinforce a coordinated approach across the school.
- The vast majority of teachers are responding well to the principal's clear vision for improvement. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed. As a result, pupils' aspirations are rising and they are making much better progress in lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Some pupils lack self-confidence and are not self-assured when talking about their learning. They sometimes lose heart in lessons when they come across difficulties.
- The majority of pupils wear their uniform with pride and look smart. In physical education lessons their kit is exemplary and this sets the right tone for self-discipline and learning.
- Pupils are taught well about bullying and so have a good understanding of the harmful effects of different types including homophobic bullying. Pupils say that bullying is not common and when it does happen it is dealt with well.
- Assemblies and tutorial activities inform pupils how to keep themselves safe from a range of risks, including when using the internet. Pupils feel safe at school.
- Pupils are aware of the importance of staying healthy both physically and emotionally. The school supports pupils' well-being by providing services such as a trained counsellor and a child psychotherapist.
- They are well prepared for life in modern Britain through taking on responsibilities such as mentoring younger pupils, serving on the school council or representing the school on sports teams.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Rates of attendance are still too low. This year attendance is increasing but it is still below average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is above average but falling. Pastoral leaders already work with these pupils and their families to emphasise the importance of regular attendance but more needs to be done.
- In most lessons there is a positive atmosphere for learning because pupils respect their teachers. However, in a minority of lessons, where the teacher is not clear enough about the conduct expected, the behaviour of some pupils disrupts learning and hinders their progress.
- The rate of exclusions has fallen dramatically since the previous inspection and is now very low.
- Pupils who need extra help to behave well receive a variety of support. Staff are tenacious in their support for individuals. As a result, the number of incidents of poor behaviour is falling.
- Since the last inspection action has been taken to ensure that pupils move around the school in a more ordered way. At breaktime and lunchtime there is a generally calm atmosphere. As pupils arrive at school they are welcomed by senior leaders and other staff.
- The behaviour of pupils who attend off-site alternative provision is closely monitored. School records indicate that these pupils behave well and are well looked after.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Since the previous inspection, the proportion of pupils gaining at least five A* to C grade GCSEs, including English and mathematics, has declined and was well below the national average in 2015. In English, attainment was above average but in mathematics attainment was significantly below average. Standards in science and history were also significantly below average. As a result, outcomes require improvement.
- Disadvantaged pupils make up nearly half of the school population. In 2015 too few of these pupils made the progress expected of them and so gaps in attainment between these pupils and others in the school were wide. Assessment information shows that disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are making better progress and so these gaps are now closing.
- The proportion of Year 11 pupils currently making or exceeding the progress expected of them in English is now well above average. In mathematics this proportion has risen sharply and is now close to but still below average.
- In GCSE media studies and religious education attainment was above average in 2015.
- Pupils join the school with standards which are below those achieved nationally. The proportion of most-able pupils in each year group is smaller than average. A high proportion of these pupils in each year group are now making at least good progress and are on track to attain the highest grades at GCSE.
- Both senior and middle leaders are confident that their predictions for outcomes at the end of this year are accurate because the system used to gather information is now reliable. Formal assessments are used more frequently and are checked both within school and with other schools. The school expects to see a significant increase in overall attainment and progress in 2016 outcomes.
- Leaders provided convincing evidence that pupils who have special educational needs or disability are achieving well. In many cases their progress is better than their classmates and other pupils nationally. This is because they receive good individual attention from teachers and classroom assistants.
- Year 7 'catch-up' funding is used well to help a small group of pupils improve their reading skills. As a result, their ability to recognise and pronounce words is improving rapidly. Year 10 pupils are used successfully to help younger pupils as part of a 'reading buddy' system. The small-group support work in mathematics is less effective. Consequently, these pupils do not improve their numeracy skills at the same rate.
- The school closely monitors the off-site provision used for a small number of pupils. These pupils are visited regularly by senior leaders and are making good progress.
- The school has a comprehensive careers education strategy providing independent advice and guidance. Pupils are supported well by a number of initiatives which help them to decide on their next steps. Information provided by the school indicates that the proportion of former pupils known to be involved in education, employment or training is rising.

School details

Unique reference number	138089
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10012019

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	727
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Scott
Principal	Jonathan Lumb
Telephone number	01325 254 000
Website	www.educationvillage.org.uk
Email address	hcsdata@educationvillage.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 February 2014

Information about this school

- Houghton Academy forms part of the Education Village Academy Trust. It is located in the same building as Beaumont Hill Academy, a special school, and Springfield Academy, a primary school. It is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average.
- A much larger proportion of pupils than seen nationally are supported by pupil premium funding. The pupil premium is additional government funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for children looked after.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Rise Carr College, the Coleridge Centre and Home & Hospital.
- A new principal was appointed in September 2015.
- Since the previous inspection there have been many staffing changes. Three new senior leaders, eight new middle managers and a total of 23 new teachers have been appointed.
- The governance of the school was restructured in September 2015. Many governance functions for the school are now delegated to a local governing body known as the Education Standards Committee.
- The school receives advice and support through the Education Village Academy Trust and additional support through consultants brought in to carry out reviews of aspects of the school's work.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Inspectors were aware during this inspection of an alleged serious incident concerning a former pupil that had occurred since the previous inspection. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the school in relation to the incident were considered alongside other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 part-lessons, of which six were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the principal, senior leaders, middle leaders, the chair of the Education Standards Committee and three other governors.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents in 13 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- 48 responses to the staff questionnaire were considered.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils before school, at breaktime and at lunchtime. They also met formally with a group of pupils from Year 10, and a group from Years 7 and 8. Inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of Darlington Local Authority as well as the chief executive of the Education Village Academy Trust.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents, including information on pupils' current progress, the school's self-evaluation, minutes of governing body meetings, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

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Michael Maddison	Ofsted Inspector

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