

The Grangefield Academy

Oxbridge Avenue, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 4LE

Inspection dates

30 November – 1 December 2016

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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal has established a culture of high expectation that permeates all aspects of the school’s work. Her relentless focus on improvement has contributed to significant increases in pupils’ progress.
- Effective teaching and positive relationships enable pupils to make good progress and achieve improving levels of attainment.
- Heads of school and subject leaders work closely together to ensure that pupils’ personal well-being and their academic progress are continually addressed.
- Governors provide focused support and challenge and these have contributed to the substantial improvements in recent years. They use their considerable expertise to hold leaders to account for key aspects of performance.
- Pupils are considerate and polite and demonstrate high levels of courtesy towards one another and adults.
- The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective. Teachers are committed to the welfare and well-being of their pupils.
- The school works effectively with Northern Education Trust and other partners to strengthen leadership, the quality of teaching and the accuracy of assessment.
- Despite recent improvements, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities remain more likely to be absent than their peers.
- Variability remains in the quality of teaching in some subjects and this can lead to unevenness in rates of progress, including the progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- The most able pupils are not consistently challenged across all subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate improvements in the rates of pupils' progress, by:
 - addressing remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching
 - providing greater challenge for the most able pupils
 - embedding recent improvements to planning and teaching.
- Improve the achievement and attendance of disadvantaged pupils by:
 - further developing actions in the classroom to complement external intervention work
 - building upon recent improvements in their attendance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal has led a significant cultural change over the past three years that has transformed the quality of teaching and standards of behaviour. An ethos of high expectation informs all aspects of the school's work.
- The principal and her team have instilled high expectations and increased levels of challenge while maintaining staff morale. Teachers feel supported and value their ongoing professional development, which is leading to clear improvements in the quality of teaching.
- Senior leaders, governors and the academy trust have worked closely to eradicate inadequate teaching and ineffective leadership. This has resulted in staff movement, but at the same time considerable support has been invested to build leadership capacity.
- Heads of school have a strong overview of pupils' well-being and they track their academic progress closely. They work with subject leaders to address underperformance swiftly and identify appropriate interventions.
- Middle leaders are closely involved in checking standards and work with senior leaders to assess the quality of teaching. They are accountable to leaders and governors but welcome this challenge and their central role in improving standards. Their work contributes to a relentless focus on the quality of teaching and intervention that is contributing to improving outcomes across the school.
- Senior leaders have established high expectations for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They ensure that all teachers take pupils' starting points and ongoing progress closely into account. This is leading to improving rates of progress, although variability remains in the quality of teaching in a minority of subjects.
- Senior leaders are committed to ongoing improvement. They work closely with local primary schools to build curriculum continuity between primary and secondary schools. A number of senior leaders sit as governors on the governing body of local primary schools to ensure that transitions are effective.
- Leaders are effectively using pupil premium funding to improve provision and support and this has led to a diminishing of differences over the past three years. Catch-up funding supports initiatives such as additional teaching assistant support and after-school reading training that are leading to improvements in reading and writing for pupils.
- An improving quality of teaching is evident in subjects such as English and mathematics, where clear leadership, effective planning and demanding curricula are leading to much stronger rates of pupils' progress. Progress in science has remained more variable. There remain occasions where the most able pupils are not adequately challenged.
- Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils have access to curriculum routes that address their needs and regularly participate in progress clubs that provide additional support. They receive helpful guidance on careers and further education,

and the school is building close links with local employers and providers of higher education.

- The school has successfully recruited staff to fill gaps in key areas, and the majority of key appointments are now in place. Leaders have successfully used teachers from the Teach First initiative to build capacity.
- Leaders have worked closely with the multi-academy trust to continually check standards, improve the quality of teaching and strengthen leadership and governance. The principal has also explored additional partnerships with local schools and the local authority to intensify actions to spread good practice rapidly. These partnerships have successfully contributed to the improvements the school has made in recent years.

Governance of the school

- The chair of governors oversees a strong team of governors who have introduced extremely robust monitoring systems that ensure that pupils' progress is consistently under review.
- Governors make frequent visits to the school, some of which are unannounced, enabling them to gain a realistic picture of the school's work. Governors have particular areas of focus that they report upon on a regular basis.
- Governors have supported leaders in the more challenging conversations that have taken place in recent years to hold teachers to account through the stronger implementation of performance management procedures.
- Governors check the use of additional funding, such as the pupil premium, and this has resulted in a diminishing of differences over the last two years. They have overseen the effective management of financial resources through a challenging period of change.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders take their responsibilities for pupils' welfare extremely seriously. The actions taken to check the suitability of adults working at the school are extremely thorough and records are assiduously maintained. Staff training is up to date and teachers pursue any concerns about pupil welfare rigorously. Pupils have a good awareness of how to stay safe and can discuss the actions they could take to stay safe online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers take close account of pupils' needs in their planning and this enables the majority of pupils to make good progress. The ethos of mutual respect promotes a positive learning climate that supports effective learning.
- The quality of teaching is strong and improving in many subjects. In English, teachers maintain a strong focus on key language features that support pupils in their writing and in their analysis of texts. Mathematics teaching is now much stronger, as pupils are challenged to pursue higher-level tasks and apply their mathematical reasoning to more complex problems.

- There are examples of motivational teaching in catering and art. For example, in catering, pupils master a range of cooking skills while exploring the complex science behind the sauces they make. In art, pupils consider how the work of established artists informs their own practice as they craft delicately shaped clay bowls with finely applied decorative adornments.
- Senior and middle leaders have rigorous systems in place to check the quality of teaching and its impact upon progress. As a result, there is increasing consistency in many aspects of teaching and assessment across the school that are promoting the improving rates of pupils' progress.
- Variability remains in the quality of teaching in some subjects. The most able pupils are not consistently challenged in science at key stage 4, while the quality of work in books is not as strong in French and history.
- The school actively promotes a love of reading. All pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 arrive in school early and take part in whole-school reading. As a result, pupils value reading and are able to read well. Inspectors heard the most able pupils reading with fluency and expression and the least able decoding effectively and talking passionately about how reading support had improved their learning and self-esteem. The teaching of literacy is becoming more embedded across the curriculum, although numeracy is less well developed.
- Time in lessons is used very effectively. Pupils are punctual and settle swiftly to their learning. The pace of learning provides sufficient time for pupils to consolidate their learning while also gaining access to new skills and concepts. On some occasions, the most able pupils are not moved on to challenges swiftly enough.
- Teachers set homework in line with the school's homework policy. Pupils respond positively to homework tasks, which they believe support and extend their learning.
- As progress is reviewed at weekly meetings, teachers ensure that appropriate and timely interventions are in place to address underachievement. Teachers typically link classroom tasks closely to additional interventions that support pupils' progress.
- Teachers are aware of the needs of disadvantaged pupils and track their progress carefully. Some of their classroom-based interventions are not as well developed as the external interventions, such as the evening progress clubs.
- The support provided for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and for the lower school nurture group is effective in helping these pupils to make good rates of progress.
- High levels of consistency were evident in teachers' use of the school's assessment policy to support progress. Pupils found that teachers' feedback helped them to improve the quality of their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Year 11 pupils described powerfully how this support has improved over the last three years. Each year group has its own head of school as part of the 'school-within-school' system

that ensures that teachers know their pupils extremely well and have a close understanding of their needs. As a result, pupils feel secure and this enables them to focus upon their learning.

- The school promotes values of respect and mutual understanding. Pupils of different faiths and cultures interact positively with one another. Pupils feel safe and supported by their teachers and their parents agree.
- Incidents of bullying are extremely rare. Pupils are comfortable in reporting the few occasions when bullying does occur as they have confidence that teachers will address this effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Their conduct around the school site and in lessons is exemplary. They line up in an orderly fashion and arrive at lessons punctually as they value their learning. Pupils are courteous and polite, greeting visitors warmly and holding doors open for one another and adults.
- The new behaviour policy encourages positive conduct. Pupils are encouraged to behave well through a simple rewards system, while clear boundaries are set for unacceptable behaviour. Rates of fixed-term exclusion are below those seen nationally.
- School leaders show vigilance in improving rates of attendance. Swift contact is made when attendance falls below target, including home visits. As a result, rates of attendance for all pupils, and for disadvantaged pupils, are improving, although disadvantaged pupils remain more likely to be absent than others.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- From their starting points, current pupils make consistently strong progress in a wide range of subjects. Progress and attainment have increased substantially over a three-year period as a result of improving teaching and stronger leadership.
- Although 2016 progress in mathematics for the outgoing Year 11 was weaker, current pupils are making much stronger rates of progress. Improvements in teaching have led to bolder challenge for pupils and work over time in books reveals strong rates of progress.
- Improved tracking and support for disadvantaged pupils have heightened their rates of progress over a three-year period such that differences between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally are diminishing. While some differences persisted in 2016, current progress of disadvantaged pupils across a range of subjects and year groups shows consistent improvement.
- The increased rigour and challenge evident in teaching is reflected in progress over time in books across a wide range of subjects. High expectations were consistently demonstrated in English, mathematics and geography books.
- While progress is improving in the majority of subjects, the most able are not consistently challenged in science, while progress in French and history remains weaker.

- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are beginning to make improved rates of progress. Current pupils are making good progress as reflected in the school's tracking systems and in their work in books over time. Their overall 'progress 8' score increased by almost two thirds of a grade in 2016 and most-able pupils made better progress in English than was seen nationally in 2016. The most able disadvantaged pupils made better progress than their non-disadvantaged peers, although overall standards of attainment remained below those seen nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities made improved progress in 2016 as a result of more focused interventions and better-quality teaching.
- Pupils are increasingly better prepared for the next stage of their education, although historically weaker progress in mathematics and for disadvantaged pupils limits this preparedness for some pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	139673
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10019692

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	586
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Copping
Principal	Nikki Gibb
Telephone number	01642 353637
Website	www.thegrangefieldacademy.org/
Email address	enquiries@thegrangefieldacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school is part of the Northern Education Trust.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above the national average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the government's

minimum standards for pupils' performance at GCSE.

- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors carried out observations of learning across a wide range of lessons, a number of which were jointly undertaken with senior leaders.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons, lunchtimes and at playtimes.
- Inspectors examined the quality of work in books, in folders and in displays around the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and middle leaders. Inspectors also talked to a wide group of staff. The lead inspector met two members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector also met a representative of the Northern Education Trust.
- Inspectors met groups of pupils in key stages 3 and 4. They also talked less formally to pupils in lessons and around the school site about aspects of their learning, behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors looked at the school's work and considered documents including the school's own evaluation of its work, the school improvement plan, curriculum plans and information relating to pupils' achievement and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took into account 31 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire, 21 free text responses, 83 responses to the pupil questionnaire and 35 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Malcolm Kirtley, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Iain Veitch	Ofsted Inspector
Julia Wright	Ofsted Inspector

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