

The Dearne Advanced Learning Centre

Goldthorpe Road, Goldthorpe, Rotherham, South Yorkshire S63 9EW

Inspection dates

30 November–1 December 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have been too slow to implement effective improvement since the last inspection. Consequently, improvements to the quality of teaching have not had time to show enough impact on pupils' achievement.
- Teaching is not good because of inconsistencies that remain in some subjects.
- Pupils' achievement remains too variable across the curriculum. Achievement over time in English, science and humanities has not been good enough. Clear evidence seen during the inspection shows that achievement in these subjects is now improving.
- Additional funds used to support disadvantaged pupils and those whose basic skills are weak on entry to the school have not been used effectively enough in the past.
- Despite improvements seen during the inspection, the difference between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and their peers nationally remains too wide.
- Leaders' approach to developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills is inconsistent. There is not enough emphasis on the development of lower-ability pupils' key skills as they move through the school.
- Where learners have poor literacy and numeracy skills they sometimes become distracted from their learning and unable to concentrate and apply themselves properly to their work.
- Governors have not been sufficiently challenging to school leaders in driving forward the pace of improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders are now acting with greater urgency and decisiveness to bring about important improvements. For example, the attendance of all pupils has improved substantially since the last inspection.
- The most able pupils make good progress overall. They are given a significant range of extra opportunities which prepare them well for life beyond the school.
- The teaching of mathematics is effective. Most pupils make good progress in this subject.
- Leaders and governors have created a safe and well-ordered environment in which pupils feel secure and well supported.
- The work done by the school to promote positive behaviour and pupils' personal development and well-being is good.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the teaching of English, science and humanities so that pupils make consistently strong progress across the curriculum, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have high expectations of the quality of work that pupils produce in lessons
 - make effective use of the recently developed assessment approaches
 - plan activities that support and challenge the least able pupils, ensuring that they are well prepared to apply themselves to difficult work in a determined manner
 - use questions to make pupils think deeply and strengthen their understanding of their work
 - provide well-planned opportunities for all pupils to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by:
 - ensuring that significant funding to support disadvantaged pupils and those who on entry to the school have weak key skills benefit directly from that funding
 - developing the skills of governors to ensure that school leaders are held rigorously to account for using additional funding effectively in a manner which brings improvements in achievement for all pupils.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The principal and other senior leaders have ensured that there is now a shared understanding across all staff at the school about what needs to be done to bring about important improvements. Previous actions which sought to ensure that all pupils make good progress have not been carried out quickly enough, or with sufficient accuracy.
- Improvements in the quality of teaching are clearly in evidence in some areas of the curriculum, particularly in mathematics. Until very recently, however, improvements in the teaching of English, science and humanities have been too slow and inconsistent to bring about good rates of progress for all pupils.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have taken robust action to deal with inadequate teaching. The outcomes of that action have not yet materialised in examination results other than in mathematics, but evidence seen during the inspection showed that pupils are now making stronger progress across the curriculum.
- The school has faced challenges in the recruitment of teachers since the last inspection and this has slowed improvement in achievement in some subjects.
- Subject leadership is now an emerging strength at the school. This has not yet, however, been in place for enough time to have sufficient impact on securing good examination results for pupils. In humanities, for example, the change in leadership has brought stability and continuity to teaching and there is a clearly improving picture of progress in humanities for pupils currently in the school.
- Leaders have only recently begun to focus on establishing important intervention and support for the significant number of pupils who arrive at the school with weak skills in writing, reading or numeracy. As a consequence, some older pupils continue to struggle in their work because of the legacy of neglect when they first entered the school. Leaders now recognise the need to prioritise this work regarding the use of important resources, particularly in relation to Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding.
- Leaders have spent a significant proportion of the pupil premium funding on general staffing and have not ensured that the funding is targeted specifically at pupils who are entitled to benefit from it. Insufficient time has also been spent in the analysis of the impact of this funding. This approach is now changing and the school's assessment information shows that the difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others at the school is beginning to narrow.
- A more effective, although relatively new, approach to assessment is driving up standards. Leaders have set targets that are more challenging for pupils, to raise their aspirations and to ensure that teachers are planning learning that is challenging for all groups. Along with careful tracking of progress, this is making a positive contribution to the achievement of the most able pupils. Many teachers are using assessment information well. However, leaders have identified that this is one area where there needs to be greater consistency.

- The school has in place effective systems which check on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and this is beginning to secure further improvements in teaching. Evidence seen during the inspection showed that teachers new to the profession are given good support in the development of their practice. Robust systems to develop the practice of more experienced teachers are now also beginning to show impact.
- The curriculum meets the needs well of higher ability and middle-ability learners. It is in need of further development for lower ability learners, particularly in the development of their communication and numeracy skills.
- The school provides a good range of extra-curricular opportunities which are appreciated by pupils of all ages and from all backgrounds. These activities play an important part in the successful personal development of pupils at the school.
- Pupils were keen to discuss in some detail the school's well organised programme of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Well planned assemblies are valued by pupils who also talked with enthusiasm about the opportunity to discuss and debate important contemporary issues during tutor time. On some occasions, however, opportunities to develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness in lessons are missed.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the risks of radicalisation, the dangers of extremism and the importance of British values. Pupils appreciate the many displays around the school which support their work and were able to speak with passion and confidence about their understanding of risk and the importance of tolerance and compassion within the school's ethos.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has stopped placing any pupils in alternative provision. Pupils most in danger of leaving education before the end of key stage 4 are now given good support within the school's own internal provision.

Governance of the school

- Governors have been too slow to act in their challenge to senior leaders to bring about key improvements since the last inspection. They are now more focused and resolute in their position and have an accurate understanding of the challenges ahead for the school.
- Governors have spent too little time in analysing the impact of the use of key resources, such as pupil premium funding, and additional funding to support Year 7 pupils who arrive with weaker levels of literacy and numeracy. Though governors and senior leaders have set about significantly improving their work in this area, their previous lack of robustness has resulted in slower rates of improvement being made by lower-ability pupils.
- Governors are well trained in statutory safeguarding requirements and strategies to prevent discrimination.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff, at all levels, are trained in safer recruitment and the 'Prevent' duty. Leaders create a culture within the school where staff show a clear understanding of their responsibility to keep pupils safe. Parents and pupils who responded to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, agree.
- Staff and governors are aware of the published requirements for keeping children safe in education and the culture of safeguarding is promoted throughout the curriculum, with issues covered also in assemblies, religious education and the tutorial programme of study.
- Procedures for checking visitors to the school and staff recruitment are very robust, so that all adults are checked for their suitability to work with children. School leaders quickly identify any pupil at risk of harm and the school engages appropriately with partners and local community agencies as necessary.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the last inspection, but good teaching is still not the norm across the school. Better teaching has led to improved achievement, especially in mathematics. However, the quality of teaching in many other subjects is still not strong enough to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress.
- Teachers plan learning conscientiously, but, in the past, have not routinely taken into account what pupils have already learned. This has resulted in some pupils not being given sufficiently challenging work while other pupils have found work too difficult. Consequently, too few pupils have made as much progress as they should.
- Sometimes, teachers do not take swift or effective action to re-engage some lower-ability pupils, who easily lose interest in their learning. Though the school's work to support lower-ability pupils is improving, the legacy of the school's previous weak work in this area is evident in some lower-ability pupils' inability to apply themselves well to challenging work.
- Assessment information is now being more effectively used in the planning of teaching. The quality of presentation and expectation in pupils' books and files is high and pupils appreciate the range of feedback they receive. This is now an area of clear improvement in the school's work though it remains inconsistent in its application across the curriculum.
- The school's work to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills requires improvement. Opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to apply and develop their literacy and numeracy are too often missed, particularly for middle- and lower-attaining pupils.
- Teaching for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving because leaders provide a good level of support for them. In addition to mainstream lessons, some of these pupils benefit from a personalised curriculum, learning life skills as well as more formal subjects. This variety helps to motivate them to make better progress.

- Some teachers use skilful questioning to check pupils' understanding and to make them think in more depth about their learning. In mathematics, for example, teachers routinely provide interesting problem-solving activities and probe pupils' understanding of mathematical knowledge so that pupils have to find solutions and solve problems. In English, science and humanities the use of skilful questioning to check and develop understanding is weaker.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The supportive culture in the school promotes pupils' well-being, including their emotional and physical welfare.
- Pupils are smartly dressed; they like their uniform and are proud of their school. They are appreciative of the recent improvements in the quality of education they are receiving and they respond positively to the school's ethos of pursuing excellence.
- Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, both within school and when they are away from school. Issues such as sexual exploitation, drug addiction and gang culture are part of the school's programme to make pupils aware of key issues facing young people. Pupils recognise the potential dangers that the use of information technologies could pose to them. This is because staff provide them with comprehensive information on how they can remain safe when using the internet or social media. Pupils have a good understanding of risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. They understand the key principles of democracy and the rule of law.
- The school is developing opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills within the school community and beyond. Through participation on the school council and other leadership opportunities, pupils are involved in activities that develop their sense of collective responsibility. From discussions with groups of pupils during the inspection, it is clear that participation in leadership activities is increasingly popular.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of the different types of bullying, including homophobic, racist, sexual and cyber bullying. Issues related to bullying are discussed in tutor groups and pupils know why all types of bullying are unacceptable. Pupils are confident that inappropriate language and behaviour are not an issue in the school and that teachers deal well with any such incidents. The detailed records that the school keeps confirm this.
- Pupils appreciate the range of opportunities organised by the school to ensure that they are prepared well for life beyond the school. Strong careers advice and guidance help pupils make the right choices and thoughtful activities across the curriculum develop personal skills and extend learning. As a result, pupils' aspirations and ambitions have been raised. However, some pupils felt that opportunities could be further supported through more individual discussions with specialist staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are helpful, polite and courteous to staff, visitors and to each other. The atmosphere in school is positive, supportive and caring.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school in a calm and orderly manner, both during and between lessons, breaktime and lunchtime. Areas of congestion in the building at peak movement times are overseen by staff, and pupils respond well to the guidance given.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good across all years and in most subjects. Pupils are punctual to lessons and settle quickly. They look smart and the presentation of their work in books is impressive.
- In a small number of lessons, lower-ability pupils do lose focus on their learning. This is because the school has not prepared them well to work hard on difficult concepts for significant periods of time.
- Pupils know how to behave safely in practical subjects such as science, technology and physical education lessons.
- Pupils spoken to during the inspection talked confidently and supportively about the school's work to improve behaviour, including the sanctions given to ensure that effective learning can take place.
- Attendance is improving and is now close to the national average. This reflects pupils' increasing enjoyment in coming to the school and the work that leaders have done to reinforce the importance of attendance and its impact on progress.
- Pupils with specific behavioural needs receive appropriate assistance from the pastoral and learning support teams. More positive attitudes to learning seen across the school are evidence of the effectiveness of additional support for pupils that require more extensive interventions.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In the past, pupils' progress from their starting points has been slow as a result of weak teaching. In recent years, pupils have left the school at the end of Year 11 with levels of attainment that have been much lower than average. The better quality of teaching now evident is helping to turn this around. Pupils' levels of skills are now rising and progress is speeding up quickly. Despite this, some older lower-ability pupils are still catching up lost ground and too few are making good progress from their previous starting points. Outcomes for pupils, therefore, still require improvement.
- Leaders recognise that, with the exception of mathematics and the performance of higher-ability learners, outcomes for pupils in 2015 and 2016 were weak. For example, in 2016, the difference in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and others nationally was still too wide. It is not yet good because the difference between their attainment and others nationally has not diminished enough in English, science and mathematics.

- Outcomes for lower-ability pupils have been weaker than for other pupils at the school. This is because insufficient attention has been paid to the need for intensive support and development of their literacy and numeracy skills in the past.
- The school's progress information for key stage 3 and key stage 4 pupils currently at the school shows improving trends which are compelling; this is reflected in the work that is completed in pupils' books. This was confirmed in discussions with pupils and in the views of parents who are confident that the school is set to secure stronger examination results in the coming years.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, make good progress. This is because the school has clear strategies to ensure that pupils who start school with high academic abilities are given opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge to the highest levels. Teachers have high expectations of what the most able pupils should achieve, and a clear focus to develop the learning of the most able pupils across the curriculum is the norm. These pupils speak with passion and confidence about their ambitious aspirations for the future.
- Outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities still require improvement, but have improved significantly since last year. This is because pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are now benefiting from much improved teaching. They receive effective extra support in lessons and during additional sessions which helps to compensate for past weaknesses in teaching.

School details

Unique reference number	106656
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	10019703

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	995
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Wendy Eyre
Principal	Christine Robinson
Telephone number	01709 892211
Website	www.dearnealc.co.uk
Email address	llacey@thedearnealc.org
Date of previous inspection	3–4 December 2014

Information about this school

- The school is of a similar size to most secondary schools.
- Most pupils attending the school are White British, with a much lower than average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups.
- In 2016, the school did meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress as they leave the school.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is well above average.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision for pupils away from the school's site.
- There have been significant changes in staff since the previous inspection.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment in a wide range of subjects. They also observed other activities for shorter periods of time. Five parts of lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors looked in detail at work in pupils' books and files.
- The inspection team met with groups of staff and with six groups of pupils. They spoke to other pupils informally at different times of the school day.
- Inspectors also met with four representatives of the governing body as well as a representative headteacher from the Barnsley Alliance.
- Inspectors took into account the 13 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 13 free text messages. They also looked at the school's own records of consultation with parents and pupils.
- Inspectors looked at a variety of documentation and information about the school. This included information about pupils' progress, documents relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding, the school's checks on the quality of teaching, its analysis of how well it is doing and its plans for further improvement.

Inspection team

Sir John Townsley, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Wendy Bradford	Ofsted Inspector
Barry Found	Ofsted Inspector
Peter McKenzie	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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