

Elemore Hall School

Pittington, Durham DH6 1QD

Inspection dates

18–19 January 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils do not make sufficient progress from their individual starting points in the key subject areas of English, mathematics and science.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of their pupils. They do not plan work that enables pupils to make rapid academic progress and catch up with age-related expectations.
- Teachers do not ensure that pupils apply their knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar consistently across all subjects.
- Despite effective work with some individual pupils and their families, pupils' absence and persistent absence remain too high.
- Senior leaders do not analyse the type and frequency of behavioural incidents with sufficient rigour. This impedes their effectiveness in improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Leaders have not ensured that teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment and progress are robust.
- Subject leaders, although willing and keen, are inexperienced at checking pupils' workbooks and judging progress rigorously.
- Leaders' planning for school improvement is weak. Governors are unable to evaluate the school's progress precisely because of a lack of targets and timescales.
- Leaders have not reviewed and updated the school's website and some policies and procedures in a timely manner. As a result, many are out of date.
- Governors do not ask for sufficient information about pupils' attainment and progress. They are unaware of, and therefore do not challenge, pupils' academic achievements in Years 7 to 10.

The school has the following strengths

- There is effective provision for music and drama. Pupils perform with confidence in front of large audiences.
- The school's provision of extra-curricular activities is strong. Many pupils attend activities until 8pm on school days.
- Pupils, through the work of the junior leadership team, contribute well to key decisions made by senior leaders.
- Parents are well informed about their child's progress through well-written and comprehensive termly reports.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress made by pupils in all subjects, but particularly in English, mathematics and science, by teachers:
 - having higher expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - planning activities which enable pupils to make rapid progress and catch up for learning time lost through absence in this or a previous school
 - ensuring that pupils apply their knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar in all subject areas as a matter of course
 - developing assessment systems and practices that are used consistently.
- Improve pupils' attendance and reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent.
- Rapidly improve the effectiveness and impact of leaders at all levels by:
 - ensuring that the school's website, policies and procedures are regularly updated to reflect current guidelines
 - implementing effective plans for school improvement which identify clearly how, when and by whom progress will be measured
 - strengthening leaders' knowledge of pupils' progress overall by taking their end of key stage 2 assessments into account, as well as their attainment on entry to Elemore Hall
 - analysing the frequency of all types of behavioural incidents and providing full details to the governing body on a regular basis.

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

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium 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

- Leaders have not ensured that pupils make sufficient progress from their starting points at the end of key stage 2, or from their baseline assessments carried out on entry to the school. Successful actions taken by leaders to quicken pupils' progress in English have not been taken in other subject areas, including mathematics and science.
- Leaders do not have the very highest expectations of pupils' attainment and progress. There is little urge and determination for pupils to reach the standards expected for their age during their time at this special provision. Leaders measuring pupils' progress from entry to the school and not from their starting points at the end of key stage 2 exemplify this. This process means that leaders, including governors, are disappointed when the school's end of key stage 4 assessment data is published and shows poor progress.
- Leaders observe teachers in their classrooms informally on a daily basis. Their feedback to staff is not focused tightly on pinpointing strengths and areas for further development. It does not lead to pupils making better progress.
- Subject leadership requires development. Leaders concentrate on their own subject areas. They do not share best practice and learn from each other. Subject leaders' feedback following a scrutiny of pupils' workbooks undertaken during the inspection concentrated on compliance with marking and assessment procedures. They did not consider pupils' all-important attainment and progress until prompted.
- Leaders have been slow to develop and implement a new assessment regime. Teachers in all subjects, except for English, still assess pupils' attainment and progress using the old national curriculum levels. These levels are no longer appropriate because they do not match the increased demands of the key stage 3 and key stage 4 national curriculum.
- The range of subjects offered by the school is strong and aimed at encouraging disaffected pupils back into education and learning. For example, pupils enjoy 'bushcraft' and thrive during these practical and exciting lessons. The formal curriculum is underpinned extremely well by a wide range of extra-curricular activities that are timetabled from the end of the school day until 8pm in the evenings.
- The provision for music and drama is strong and very well resourced. Pupils make good academic progress in the performing arts. They also grow in confidence and can perform well in front of large audiences. For example, their recent performance of 'Romeo and Juliet' at the Gala Theatre in Durham merited a standing ovation from the full house.
- The programme to develop cultural awareness is effective and covers a wide range of topics, showing how the school raises pupils' awareness of key issues locally and in the wider global community. For example, pupils are interested in and knowledgeable about current events such as the American presidential election and inauguration.
- The coordinator for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SENCO) ensures that comprehensive records are kept and timely meetings are held with parents, carers and professionals. The provision ensures that the majority of

pupils make progress socially and emotionally. However, there is not enough focus on pupils' achievements academically and, as a result, progress is slower.

- Local authority officers visit the school regularly to check the school's procedures and records in relation to pupils' behaviour. For example, the local authority confirmed that incidents of physical intervention are reducing over time. However, the local authority has an overgenerous view of the school's overall effectiveness. The local authority agreed with senior leaders that the school's outcomes were good even though not enough pupils are making good progress from their starting points.

Governance of the school

- Governors are too accepting of information provided by the headteacher. They receive assessment data about the Year 11 GCSE cohort of pupils but have little knowledge of the attainment and progress of pupils in Years 7 to 10.
- Governors do not challenge leaders effectively about the impact of the government's additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium. They understand the impact of additional special educational needs funding on pupils' social and emotional well-being, but do not challenge the impact on pupils' progress, especially in the key areas of English, mathematics and science.
- Governors do realise their need to challenge and support leaders. They do attend appropriate training and do have a list of questions that they can ask of leaders. These skills of questioning and probing need further development.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff, including the large number of support staff, understand how to keep pupils safe from harm and are aware of the signs of all forms of abuse.
- Leaders work proactively with a wide range of external agencies to ensure pupils' safety. Staff make child protection referrals appropriately and immediately. They fulfil their duty of care well.
- Senior leaders, including governors, do not check the accuracy of the school's recruitment checks often enough. They had not identified a number of administrative shortcomings on the school's record of recruitment checks. These were rectified by the end of the inspection.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- There is a lack of stability in the mathematics department. A newly appointed substantive post holder will not take up post until Easter 2017. The pupils will have had at least three mathematics teachers by the end of the current academic year. As a result, pupils are not making sufficient progress in mathematics.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of their pupils. They do not set work routinely which is at just the right level to ensure that individuals make good progress. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 7 and Year 10 were taught exactly

the same content about the human digestive system.

- Teaching in English is improving. The introduction of a new way of assessing pupils' progress in English is proving beneficial. Pupils, although not making expected progress, are making better progress from their individual starting points, especially in reading.
- Staff in the English department work hard to teach spelling, punctuation and grammar rules. However, teachers in other subject areas do not build on this effective practice. There is no 'whole-school' determination to instil these essential skills. Pupils' written work in 'culture' is marred by the number of uncorrected spelling errors.
- Teaching in subjects such as music, drama, physical education (PE) and history is stronger. In these subjects, teachers aim high, provide engaging activities and, as a result, pupils are interested in their learning.
- Careers education is strong and effective for Year 11 pupils. It is not as strong or purposeful in key stage 3.
- Teachers and learning support assistants are highly skilled in managing pupils' behaviour 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.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and can list the types of bullying that exist. They are confident that staff take action when alerted to incidents of bullying. However, pupils told inspectors that bullying, including racist name-calling, persists.
- As identified by senior leaders, pupils (although growing in confidence) have not yet developed sufficient resilience. They find it hard to maintain their effort when work is challenging.
- Pupils do not produce neat and well-presented work as a matter of course. The standard of their work is better in lessons delivered by teachers who have high expectations of them.
- The school nurse visits weekly and provides effective advice and support in relation to issues such as healthy eating and sexual health. Four pupils signed up for a smoking cessation course during the inspection.
- Pupils understand how to stay safe online. They are knowledgeable about using privacy settings and keeping personal information out of the public domain.
- The democratically elected members of the school's junior leadership team make important decisions. For example, after consulting with pupils, they recently decided to introduce a school uniform.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.

- Pupils' behaviour does not improve quickly enough following admittance to this specialist provision. Although reducing, there are still too many incidents of physical interventions over time.
- Staff are not vigilant enough about pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtimes. For example, they do not uphold school policy consistently and intervene to stop some pupils smoking on the school site.
- Despite the work undertaken with individual pupils and their families, pupils' attendance is not high enough. Too many pupils are persistently absent or abscond from school in the middle of the school day.
- Staff use de-escalation strategies effectively to manage behaviour. The 'morning meeting' which takes place during the first ten minutes of each school day is particularly successful in settling pupils on entry into school and bringing staff and pupils together as a caring community.
- Staff liaise well with staff from Durham local authority's personalised alternative curriculum centre (PACC). Staff from both settings are knowledgeable about pupils' attendance, behaviour and achievements.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Over time, in the key subjects of English, mathematics and science, pupils have not made enough progress from their starting points.
- A scrutiny of pupils' workbooks and the school's assessment information shows that pupils are beginning to make faster progress in English. Leaders agree that the school's most able pupils are making the most rapid progress in English.
- Across the school, pupils are currently making much less progress in mathematics. Progress is particularly slow for the pupils with middle prior attainment.
- The proportion of pupils who achieve five good-quality GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, has declined year-on-year over time.
- In 2016, none of the five pupils who achieved the expected level of attainment at the end of key stage 2 in English achieved the expected GCSE grade C at the end of key stage 4. Similarly, none of the 10 pupils who achieved a level 4 in mathematics achieved the expected grade at the end of key stage 4.
- Younger pupils with low prior ability in reading are making faster progress this year. They are able to answer simple reading comprehension questions correctly and are beginning to choose books to read for pleasure.
- The school ensures that pupils achieve work-related qualifications in a wide range of areas including 'Rockschool,' preparation for work, mental health and nutrition.
- The 'transitions coordinator' works proactively with a range of providers to ensure that all pupils access further education, training or employment when they leave the school.

School details

Unique reference number	114337
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10003956

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Hillary
Headteacher	Richard Royle
Telephone number	0191 372 0275
Website	www.elemorehallschool.com
Email address	elemore@durhamlearning.net
Date of previous inspection	6–7 February 2013

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about charging and remissions, pupil premium, Year 7 catch-up premium, special educational needs and/or disabilities and governance on its website.
- Elemore Hall School has planned places for 82 secondary-aged pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan or a statement of special educational needs because of their social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Pupils join the school any time between Years 7 and 11.
- The school offers day and extended day places to boys and girls, and weekly boarding places to boys only.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those eligible for support through pupil premium funding, is three times the national average. All of the key stage 4 leavers in 2015 and 2016 were disadvantaged.

- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as a first language.
- Six pupils attend off-site training at the personalised alternative curriculum centre, which is based at another Durham local authority special school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classrooms across a wide range of subjects in all year groups. Two observations, on the first day of the inspection, were carried out jointly with the deputy headteacher.
- During visits to lessons, inspectors spoke with pupils and looked at their work to find out more about how well they were learning. The lead inspector read with two Year 7 pupils and two Year 8 pupils, and listened to Year 7 pupils reading during an English lesson.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. Formal meetings were held with a group of key stage 3 pupils and a group of key stage 4 pupils.
- Additional meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, the chair of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. The lead inspector talked by telephone to a member of staff at Durham local authority's personalised alternative curriculum centre.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school more broadly and looked at a range of documentation, including policies and the school's improvement plan.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to be taken into account. Inspectors considered the school's own surveys of pupils' and parents' views.
- The headteacher was absent from school during the inspection.

Inspection team

Belita Scott, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Fiona Dixon

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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