

Lord Lawson of Beamish Academy

Birtley Lane, Birtley, Chester le Street, County Durham DH3 2LP

Inspection dates

8–9 February 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
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have been too slow in recognising poor progress and then taking decisive action to drive improvement. Too many pupils have underachieved since the last inspection.
- Progress in mathematics and science is below average because of poor leadership and teaching over time. New subject leaders are taking appropriate action. They know it will take time to bring about improvement.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is well below that of other pupils nationally. Leaders' use of the pupil premium funding has not been directed effectively to support their learning. In addition, too many disadvantaged pupils do not attend regularly.
- The achievement of the most able pupils is too low in too many subjects.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent. Teachers' expectations of pupils are not always high enough. Teaching does not always meet the needs of pupils. Homework is used inconsistently to support learning.
- Leaders' monitoring of teachers' performance is not sufficiently rigorous. Consequently, leaders have an inaccurate view of the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on pupils' learning across the school.
- Teachers do not always have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct both in lessons and around the site. As a result, rules are not always adhered to and, in some lessons, there is some low-level disruption which hinders learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The provision for post-16 students is good. They are well supported. Students increasingly make good progress and most move on successfully to higher education, training or the world of work.
- Leaders seek to ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next steps in education or training by the development of the personal skills and qualities they need to succeed.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and provides many opportunities to develop their understanding of British values.
- Safeguarding procedures and practices are effective. Leaders have created a strong safeguarding culture in the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers, by:
 - ensuring that all leaders have an absolutely accurate understanding of pupils' progress within subjects and the potential of their pupils, so that they plan exactly how to bring about improvement
 - sharpening improvement planning with well-defined milestones and unequivocal lines of responsibility
 - ensuring that leaders carefully, rigorously and thoroughly monitor the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress
 - ensuring that leaders are quick to respond to underperformance and bring about rapid improvement when underperformance is identified
 - ensuring that leaders and governors account rigorously for the difference that additional funding makes to the learning of specific groups of pupils, including the pupil premium, Year 7 catch-up funding and funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Improve the effectiveness of governors, by:
 - ensuring that the governing body challenges school leaders robustly and holds them to account for any poor performance
 - ensuring that governors receive external training in the analysis and understanding of national data in order to support their work in holding the school robustly to account for its performance, and prevent them being deflected from this task.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by:
 - developing the skills of middle leaders, so that they can hold teachers to account effectively and provide them with necessary support when required
 - eliminating inconsistencies in the quality of teaching within and between subjects and during tutor time
 - ensuring that accurate assessment is used by teachers to identify, and then meet, the needs of all groups of pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, to help them make good progress
 - ensuring that subject leaders check rigorously that homework is being used consistently and effectively to consolidate learning and prepare pupils for the work to come
 - strengthening teachers' expectations of what their most-able pupils can achieve so that learning activities enable them to fulfil their potential.
- Improve the behaviour of pupils, by:
 - ensuring that staff implement the behaviour policy consistently
 - ensuring that staff insist on school rules being adhered to around the school site

- improving the attendance particularly for disadvantaged pupils so that their learning is not interrupted and they make good progress.
- Improve the outcomes for pupils, by:
 - ensuring that leaders of all subject areas, and particularly those in mathematics and science, improve and accelerate the progress of all pupils including disadvantaged pupils, the most able and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

- Senior leaders have been too slow in driving improvement in pupils' progress and attainment at the end of key stage 4. They consider that pupils' achievement is good because standards in key subjects are average. They have not focused well enough on the progress pupils make from their often above-average starting points into school.
- Pupils' progress is below average overall and particularly so in mathematics and science. Leaders misled themselves and others by providing and using inappropriate data analyses. Consequently, significant, entrenched underperformance since the last inspection has not been challenged sufficiently.
- Substantial pupil premium funding, meant to support disadvantaged pupils, has had little impact on their learning and progress. It has not been directed to support their needs effectively. Leaders failed to understand that the purpose of the additional funding is to enable disadvantaged pupils to keep up with other pupils nationally and to further accelerate their learning. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is well below that of other pupils nationally.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding and funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been partially effectively used. There is evidence that it is now being used to greater effect but the progress these pupils make in lessons is too variable.
- The school's evaluation of its work is too optimistic and plans for improvement lack detail and clear lines of accountability. A new plan for supporting disadvantaged pupils is more comprehensive.
- The school has created a culture where discriminatory and prejudiced behaviour is not tolerated. However, it has not succeeded in enabling all pupils to experience equality of opportunity because funding for disadvantaged pupils has not been well used.
- Leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment lacks rigour, as does the monitoring of pupils' work. In too many departments, the quality of teaching and learning is evaluated as uniformly 'good', whereas, in fact, there is substantial and significant variation within subjects and between subjects.
- Many subject leaders, including those new to post in mathematics and science, are deeply aware of the challenge they face in accelerating progress. They are increasingly using assessment data to monitor the performance of different groups of pupils and then acting to secure improvement where progress has stalled. Subject leaders are already acting to improve the quality and consistency of teaching and implement new curriculum plans. This is improving rates of progress that pupils are making in lessons.
- Performance management of teaching staff reflects a growing understanding of the need to monitor the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress. Targets are carefully reviewed and also encompass teachers' personal development needs.
- Newly qualified teachers are well supported and value greatly the professional development they receive from their mentor and also the training they share with all the staff.

- There is no doubt that leaders and managers want to create a school where pupils thrive. They have brought about significant changes to the curriculum since the last inspection. This has been changed from a predominantly vocational curriculum to one that focuses on academic qualifications and is both broad and balanced. A wide range of extra-curricular activities are available which encourage pupils to pursue personal interests including sports and the performing arts.
- There is substantial evidence throughout the school of the good impact of leaders' work to promote fundamental British values and support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Governance of the school

- Governors are astute and committed to the school. They know it well and regularly undertake visits in order to support staff and to check things out for themselves. They ensure that arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective.
- Governors have asked the right questions of leaders regarding the progress of disadvantaged pupils and the impact of pupil premium funds. However, responses to questions have not always been accurate. Governors have looked outward to secure independent external views of the school's effectiveness. However reports from the external consultant failed to alert them to the depth and seriousness of the continuing weaknesses in pupils' progress. Consequently, governors have not been able to hold leaders rigorously to account for their actions.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet statutory requirements. The school's safeguarding policies and practices are strong. Rigorous checking procedures are in place for child protection. All staff have been trained in safeguarding and child protection. They know what to do if they feel that a child is at risk.
- Leaders work effectively with parents and external agencies to safeguard pupils and ensure that all referrals are followed up carefully by staff. Leaders are vigilant regarding children potentially missing from education and ensure the right agencies are informed quickly to ensure that they are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because it is too variable in most subjects and in tutor time. Pupils say the quality of their learning experience is entirely dependent on 'who you get'. This was borne out by inspection evidence.
- Too often, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough and the level of challenge in lessons is too low. Teachers' planning does not consider well enough what pupils need to learn in order to secure rapid progress. It does not build on what pupils already know and can do. In some lessons, pupils complete little work and this is not challenged.
- Assessment of pupils' work is at times overgenerous, which then limits their

understanding of how to improve. In too many lessons, teachers are trying to help pupils to catch up due to weak learning from previous years.

- The setting of homework is inconsistent. It varies considerably in terms of regularity, quality and quantity. Its impact on learning is just as variable. This is an area of concern raised by pupils and parents. Such variability was also noted by inspectors.
- Teachers are increasingly aware of pupils in their classes who are disadvantaged and may need additional support. Inspectors noted that pupils, both disadvantaged and most-able disadvantaged, are now well supported in lessons. Strategies to support these pupils are very new. It is too early to see a sustained impact on their learning over time.
- Support for pupils in Year 7 and 8, who are working well below the national average, benefit from working together in a 'project group' for some of their lessons. They are supported by additional staff who know their individual needs well. Progress in literacy and numeracy is strong and carefully monitored. An inspector heard some pupils read and their strong progress was clearly evident.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is less effective and more variable when they learn in mainstream classes. Here, progress is not so carefully tracked and they do not always make the progress they should. Reasons for the lack of progress in English and mathematics in the 2016 GCSE results are not well understood by school leaders.
- While the quality of teaching is variable and requires improvement, some teaching is effective, including in the core subjects of English, mathematics, and science. Some teachers' planning is sharp. Challenge is sometimes high. The most able pupils are sometimes stretched and learning proceeds at a rapid pace. Teachers' questions are sometimes skilful and deepen pupils' learning. Strong subject knowledge is a significant feature and, during the inspection, this was particularly noticeable in the sixth form.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Many pupils are keen to do well, have good attitudes to learning and are proud of their achievements. They are considerate and show respect for others' points of view.
- Pupils feel safe in the school. Parents and staff agree. Pupils know who to go to if something does worry them. Pupils are aware of different forms of bullying. They say that bullying on occasions does happen but is effectively dealt with. School records confirm this.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They learn about what constitutes a healthy diet and the importance of exercise to support their health and well-being.
- School leaders ensure that transition between primary and secondary, and secondary and post-16, is managed well. As a result, pupils gain confidence quickly when they move across key stages.

- Pupils value the careers information, advice and guidance that they receive and believe this helps them to select appropriate pathways for their post-16 education. They are increasingly able to critique their own work and carry out improvement. This is of importance in developing independence in learning and in preparing for the next stage in education, employment or training.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision on a part-time basis. They are part of the main school for most of the week. As such, they experience the same provision as others. Their attitudes to learning on their placements are good.
- The school teaches personal, social, health and economic education and fundamental British values through assemblies and by using external speakers, 'well-being days' and tutor time. These activities are well resourced. However, not all teachers fully support this work in tutor time. As a result, some learning is not secure. Some pupils have less understanding than might be expected regarding how to keep themselves safe from the potential dangers of the internet, and the dangers of extremism and sexual exploitation.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Attendance overall is broadly average. However, the education of some pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, continues to be significantly impaired by poor attendance and high rates of persistent absence.
- When teaching does not challenge pupils and the pace of learning is slow, pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning deteriorate. Low-level disruption then also prevents other pupils from making progress. There is a systematic approach to managing behaviour but it is not always adhered to by staff.
- School rules are not enforced by everyone. For example, pupils were seen throughout the inspection eating in corridors and using mobile phones in between lessons. This is not allowed. Staff and pupils know the rules but they are not consistently applied. This undermines pupils' understanding of expectations for behaviour and weakens the authority of staff.
- The majority of pupils conduct themselves well outside of lessons and movement around the school is generally orderly. A minority of pupils let themselves down and do not behave well nor show the level of self-control they should. This is of concern both to pupils and parents and was expressed in the online surveys. It was also seen by inspectors during the inspection.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Over time, too many pupils have not reached the standards of which they are capable at the end of key stage 4. The progress they have made overall is well below national averages and has not improved rapidly enough. Progress from pupils' starting points in mathematics and science has remained stubbornly low for a number of years. Progress in English, humanities and modern foreign languages has improved and is now average.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils in 2016 was substantially below that of other

pupils nationally with the same starting points. This has also been the case for a number of years. It was low across a range of subjects including English, mathematics and science. Progress is even lower for the most-able disadvantaged pupils. The impact of pupil premium funding to improve the progress made by disadvantaged pupils has been poor. The needs of this group of pupils have not been a priority for the school until very recently.

- Overall, the most able pupils do not make enough progress across a range of subjects at the end of key stage 4.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make variable progress by the end of key stage 4, with notable weakness in English and mathematics, although they make better progress in vocational subjects.
- Leaders are now taking action to bring about improvement, especially in mathematics and science. They are putting plans in place to support the progress of disadvantaged pupils and also pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. There is some evidence of improvement and an increase in the level of challenge for the most able pupils. However, change has yet to be embedded and evident in every classroom.
- Evidence in pupils' books suggests that the current pupils in key stage 4 are behind in their learning and will struggle in the core subjects of English, maths and science to reach the outcomes of which they are capable in 2017. Subject leaders in these subjects acknowledge that it will take substantial time to close gaps in the learning of all pupils and accelerate their learning. There is some evidence, within the school's own assessment and tracking systems, of improving standards at key stage 3.
- Pupils who entered the school in Year 7 and needed to catch up in literacy were effectively supported last academic year, although there was no support for them in numeracy. This academic year, pupils are more effectively supported through the 'project time' lessons and all those who are behind expectations receive one-to-one tutoring to help them catch up to where they should be.
- A small number of pupils access off-site provision. For most, this is part time and they attend the remainder of lessons at the school. There is regular communication with the school about attendance and pupils' personal development but there is little evaluation of the quality of their learning and outcomes. There is evidence to show that most pupils who attended alternative provision in Year 11 progressed successfully into employment.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leadership of the sixth form is effective and expectations of learners are high. The head of sixth form has a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of provision. She knows exactly what needs to be done to bring about further improvement and is taking appropriate actions to improve weaker areas.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form is good. Relationships between staff and students are positive and supportive.
- Students say that they are well supported by teachers. They know what they need to do to improve regarding their studies. Students are supported in making good use of

their independent study time and this is carefully monitored by the school.

- The school provides a good range of academic and vocational subjects and fully meets the requirements of 16 to 19 study programmes.
- Students benefit from pertinent, timely careers information, advice and guidance. Most students take part in relevant work experience. They value greatly the support of their tutors as they prepare applications for university, further education, apprenticeships or work. Most students progress to their chosen destination and an increasingly high proportion move on to prestigious universities.
- Students' personal development and well-being is good. They spoke positively about their understanding of the dangers of drugs and the risks of using the internet and social media sites. They enjoy the range of external speakers who support the work of their tutors, ensuring they know how to keep themselves safe and healthy, both emotionally and physically. Students say that behaviour is good and there is no bullying in the sixth form.
- A high proportion of students stay in the sixth form for two years and complete their study programmes. Most of those who leave at the end of Year 12 do so to take up apprenticeships or offers of employment.
- Some students enter the sixth form not having attained good GCSE grades in English or mathematics. They make good progress and the proportion of those who both improve and pass examinations is well above average.
- Outcomes for students are good. They enter the sixth form with broadly average attainment and make broadly average progress from their starting points in both academic and vocational study programmes. This is an improving picture over time. Students made strong progress in lessons during the inspection in a range of subjects.
- Further work is needed, however, to eradicate remaining differences in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment between subjects and within subjects.

School details

Unique reference number	137942
Local authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	10023883

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	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,464
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Albert Leaf
Principal	Mark Lovatt
Telephone number	0191 4334026
Website	lordlawson.org.uk
Email address	mlovatt@lordlawson.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 April 2013

Information about this school

- Lord Lawson of Beamish Academy is significantly larger than the average secondary school.
- The principal joined the school in September 2013.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is a

little below average.

- The school meets the government's minimum floor standards at the end of both key stage 4 and key stage 5.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision managed by a vocational placement service known as New Leaf.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about governance, exclusion arrangements, accessibility or equality.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across a wide range of lessons and learning activities. Many of these activities were conducted jointly with members of the senior leadership team and subject leaders.
- Pupils' written work was examined carefully during lessons and discussed with leaders.
- Inspectors observed behaviour between lessons, during breaks and lunchtimes. They spoke with pupils from all year groups, both formally and informally and listened to pupils read.
- The 78 parental responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View were considered. Online questionnaire returns from 128 pupils and 63 members of staff were also taken into account.
- Inspectors held meetings with the school principal, senior leaders, middle leaders and also teachers who have qualified recently. They met with the chair and two other members of the governing body. The chair of the governing body is also a member of the academy trust.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's own evaluation of how well it is doing, plans for development, performance management documents, information about the work of the governing body, records of the monitoring of teaching and data relating to pupils' achievement. Safeguarding and child protection documentation, attendance data and records relating to behaviour were also examined.

Inspection team

Janice Gorch, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Darren Stewart	Her Majesty's Inspector
Carl Sugden	Ofsted Inspector
Nick Horn	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Cummings	Ofsted Inspector
Rebekah Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Julie McGrane	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017