

King James I Academy Bishop Auckland

South Church Road, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL14 7JZ

Inspection dates

28–29 March 2017

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
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher is resolute and committed to raising standards and expectations for both staff and pupils. His efforts are reflected within pupils' improved outcomes in Year 11 in 2016.
- Governors and other leaders have initiated strategies that have had a positive impact on pupils' outcomes over time.
- External support has also been effective in driving school improvement, such as the leadership of modern foreign languages.
- Pupils' progress across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, is now good. Standards are rising. Disadvantaged pupils achieve well.
- A clear focus on bespoke training and the development of staff has paid dividends. Teaching has improved and is good, particularly in key stage 4.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge and skilful questioning ensure that pupils are motivated to learn. Although in the main, assessment information is used well to provide work well matched to pupils' needs, sometimes, work lacks challenge, particularly for the most able. There remains scope to share good teaching practice more widely among staff.
- The curriculum offers a broad and personalised approach. Leaders think carefully about the subjects that pupils study so that they are prepared well for life beyond school.
- Although pupils achieve well in English, opportunities to develop their literacy skills across the curriculum are still, sometimes, overlooked.
- As a result of good teaching and leadership, students in the sixth form achieve well. Students in the sixth form are excellent role models for younger year groups.
- Pupils are polite and respectful and behave well. They are positive ambassadors for the school.
- Pupils feel safe and are kept safe. Any concerns are dealt with promptly.
- Leaders' targeted and continued efforts to improve attendance are being successful.
- New schemes of learning continue to improve pupils' outcomes. However, leaders need to continue to check that they are having a sustained and equal impact across all year groups.
- The vast majority of parents are very positive about the school. They recognise that the quality of education has improved.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the impact of leadership and management even further by:
 - consolidating improvements in pupils' outcomes so that these are consistent across all year groups and subjects
 - checking the effectiveness of new schemes of learning and the quality of teaching in key stage 3 so that they have a positive impact on improving pupils' outcomes.
- Further improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - making better use of assessment information to ensure that all pupils, in particular the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils, are continually challenged
 - raising expectations further by giving pupils increased opportunities to write at length across a wide range of subjects for different purposes and audiences
 - giving pupils more opportunities to embed their literacy skills across a wide range of subjects and monitoring the impact of this
 - sharing teachers' expertise and skills more widely among staff.
- Further develop strategies to improve attendance so that it is consistently in line with or above the national average for all groups of pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher's resolute and committed approach to 'giving young people opportunities' by raising teachers' and pupils' expectations and standards is shared by the whole school community. His determination to improve provision and outcomes has resulted in sustained and clear improvements in 2016 outcomes.
- Staff and parents agree that the school is well led and managed. Staff morale is high and many staff reported to inspectors that they felt both well trained and supported in their work.
- As a result of strong and focused leadership by senior staff, leaders at all levels are ambitious for the school and all of its pupils. Leaders have a shared ethos of high expectations and high standards across the school. Consequently, the quality of teaching has improved, resulting in better outcomes for pupils.
- Senior leaders carefully prioritise the strategies that make a difference and have the most impact on pupils' outcomes. For example, support from the local authority has improved leadership in modern foreign languages and staffing changes in history and science have strengthened teaching.
- Attendance for all pupils is improving. This is because leaders work tirelessly to identify and remove barriers. This has resulted in improvements in pupils' attendance. Leaders rigorously evaluate the impact of their actions and then move promptly to fine tune these actions to help ensure that pupils attend regularly.
- Senior leaders, guided by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, take an active role in evaluating the school's performance and have a realistic understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. For example, leaders have taken swift and effective action to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. There are clear signs that pupils are now making stronger progress across a range of subjects because of these actions.
- Middle leaders are enthusiastically driving forward improvements in their subject areas and year groups. There is a shared responsibility for pupils' welfare, development and outcomes. Middle leaders are held to account for the success of pupils through effective performance management systems. For example, senior leaders hold regular, challenging conversations with middle leaders to review pupils' progress.
- Staff training is closely matched to improving pupils' outcomes and ensuring their safety and welfare. All staff engage in training based on whole-school priorities. In addition, bespoke training in separate departments gives ownership to middle leaders. Staff spoke highly of professional development opportunities and the opportunities they are given to improve their practice and progress as future leaders.
- The school has robust and reliable systems in place to assess pupils and track their progress. Both senior and middle leaders use this information purposefully to monitor pupils' progress and intervene where appropriate.
- Leaders spend pupil premium funding wisely on effective resources to secure

improvement for these pupils. For example, disadvantaged pupils have access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which has resulted in improved attitudes, attendance and outcomes.

- The Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium is used effectively; pupils are given opportunities to practise spellings and to read widely. Pupils also benefit from spelling challenges in tutor time. In mathematics, pupils benefit from opportunities to solve challenging problems and show their working out.
- Funding used to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been used effectively over time. The special educational needs coordinator monitors pupils' progress in a timely way and, where appropriate, deploys support assistants to work with pupils to accelerate their progress.
- Leaders think carefully about the range of subjects that pupils follow. The curriculum is broad, yet personalised; it takes into account the needs of individuals and their future aspirations. This motivates pupils to do well. The school also provides all pupils with an exciting range of enrichment opportunities. These include involvement in music and drama groups, links with international charities and visits to a wide range of interesting places. Pupils are prepared well for their next steps and for life in modern Britain.
- The school has invested a lot of time and energy in developing new schemes of learning that are in line with the aspirational target-setting system and also curriculum changes. Leaders now need to evaluate the impact of these initiatives and improvements as well as the quality of teaching in key stage 3 in order to ensure that they have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.

Governance of the school

- Governors are unwavering in their support for the headteacher; they balance this with appropriate, well-informed challenge. They are justifiably proud of all that the school achieves, but remain ambitious for further improvements. A recent review of governance has sharpened their skills in holding senior and middle leaders to account.
- Governors are reflective and measured. They use key information received by school leaders in a timely manner. They use this alongside information from other sources and their own direct experiences of the school to monitor specific areas of school life. They do not rely solely on what senior leaders tell them.
- Governors fully understand their strategic role in sustaining long-term improvements. They share the determination of the headteacher to continue such improvements. They moved swiftly to challenge the headteacher when pupils' outcomes were not good enough; they now hold leaders to account in a more informed and incisive manner.
- Governors have a firm grasp of how effectively additional funding is used. For example, governors were able to describe precisely how Year 7 catch-up funding has had an impact on pupils' literacy and positive attitudes to learning.
- Governors are very aware of their responsibilities regarding safeguarding. They have benefited from appropriate training and are skilled in supporting and challenging those responsible for pupil safety.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff are trained in appropriate safeguarding practices. Records demonstrate that all staff have read the most recent guidance documents. As a result, staff are confident and knowledgeable about what action to take if they have a concern about a pupil's safety and well-being.
- Pupils feel safe in their school. Pupils spoken to during the inspection were confident about whom to go to if they have any worries. They were all confident that issues would be dealt with quickly and effectively. This is because staff know the pupils well and have built positive relationships with pupils and their families.
- There is a very strong team approach to safeguarding at the school which ensures that staff prioritise and deal with situations swiftly. Partnerships with local services are effective in coordinating multi-agency approaches when necessary.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching has improved significantly and is now good. This is because teachers have been systematically challenged and well supported by leaders to develop their skills and to be more reflective in their classroom practices.
- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. This instils confidence in the pupils and motivates them to do their very best.
- Teachers use skilful and effective questioning to develop and consolidate pupils' knowledge and understanding. For example, in Year 11 English, questioning was effective because it consolidated pupils' thinking about the impact of Seamus Heaney's language techniques.
- Teachers know their pupils well. A growing proportion of teachers plan activities that aim to challenge pupils; because of this pupils respond with enthusiasm and make the progress expected of them. In the main, teachers use assessment information effectively to plan appropriate learning for the pupils. However, more still needs to be done to ensure that teachers use this information to challenge all pupils so that their knowledge, skills and understanding deepens. This is particularly the case for the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils.
- Teachers structure learning to ensure that they meet the needs of lower ability pupils. As a result, pupils respond positively and achieve well. They reach the standards of which they are capable of over time.
- Reading programmes have ensured that pupils throughout key stage 3 who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities improve their reading skills. They are now reading with more fluency and confidence.
- Pupils are positive about the impact of homework and learning outside school. Pupils are very appreciative of the after-school and holiday provision provided for them to enhance their learning.
- Additional and support staff are well deployed. They are knowledgeable about pupils' needs and fully involved in lesson planning. At the end of each session, they inform

teaching staff of pupils' progress.

- The school's assessment system is robust. Teachers check the accuracy of their judgements about pupils' work and progress through close collaboration with each other. As a result of these fruitful professional discussions, a consensus of accuracy is agreed upon. This accuracy gives leaders and teachers realistic information about how well pupils are achieving over time and where appropriate, individualised interventions are needed.
- Pupils are afforded some opportunities to write at length across a range of subjects, particularly in English. When they have these opportunities, they demonstrate growing skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar and organisation and development of their ideas. However, this is not consistently the case. Opportunities to write at length across a wide range of subjects for different purposes and audiences are sometimes overlooked. Sometimes, expectations of what the pupils can and should do are not high enough.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud to be a part of this school. Pupils want to learn and they enjoy learning. They work well together and show real respect, understanding and concern for each other.
- Pupils develop a clear sense of their self-worth and they respect the views of others through class discussions and the opportunities in the personal, social and health education programme.
- The school uses a range of approaches including assemblies, tutor time and lessons to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. For example, an assembly observed during the inspection focused on the implications and impact of recent terrorist acts; this provoked thinking and helped develop pupils' moral sense.
- The school provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to take on roles of responsibility. For example, there are well-structured roles for prefects who undertake a range of duties, including the supervision and mentoring of younger pupils. Pupils across the school also lead in organising a wide range of charity events that have a local, national and international focus. Such opportunities encourage pupils to widen and deepen their understanding of their place in the world and promote their thinking about the responsibilities of citizenship.
- Staff know the pupils very well. Pupils appreciate this and they recognise and are thankful for the extra efforts staff put into organising additional opportunities for pupils. These include regular, after-school support sessions for Year 11 pupils, celebration events, after-school clubs and Easter school. Pupils attend these opportunities in high numbers and they say that these events enhance their well-being and support their learning.
- An ethos of respect and tolerance for all underpins the school's code of conduct. Pupils understand that their life at school and beyond is enhanced by treating all people with

respect and care. As a result, there are very few incidents of, for example, intolerant behaviour at the school. Where they do take place, they are dealt with robustly and humanely by staff. Pupils firmly believe that 'being different' is celebrated rather than condemned.

- Pupils are realistic and are aware that bullying takes place from time to time. However, these incidents are very rare. The extensive range of opportunities that the school gives pupils to discuss and explore how to keep safe means that they are aware of the different forms that bullying can take and are well prepared to address them. Pupils are clear about what to do if they or a friend were anxious or concerned. They reported that if they did feel anxious, they were very confident that adults at the school would deal with their concerns swiftly and effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are well behaved and very few incidents of low-level disruption in classrooms were seen during the inspection. Where incidents did take place, staff dealt with them quickly and appropriately. Pupils arrive to lessons on time, ready and prepared to learn. They wear their uniform with pride.
- The atmosphere is calm around the school and on corridors during social times and between lessons. Pupils enter and leave the school site at the beginning and end of the day safely and responsibly. Staff supervision is effective and visible.
- Classrooms and corridors are tidy, bright and colourful. Displays are attractive and celebrate a wide range of high-quality pupils' work. Other display materials are also used to support the school's ethos of learning, respect and tolerance.
- Where pupils attend alternative settings for their learning, they attend regularly. This is because the school, working with its partners, has set up very effective and rigorous systems to support pupils' attendance and check on their progress and well-being. They are supervised closely and safely transported to and from their placements.
- As a result of focused, relentless and effective action by the school, attendance overall is improving and is close to the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is also improving and is approaching that of other pupils at the school. Persistent absenteeism has been reduced significantly because the school has taken effective action and used a range of successful strategies to remove barriers to attendance. Even though attendance is improving, leaders are continuing to drive further improvements so that attendance is consistently above the national average for all groups of pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Current pupils' progress is good and it is improving in a sustained way. In 2016, examination results overall were broadly in line with or above the national averages.
- Throughout the inspection, leaders provided compelling evidence that assessment information about current pupils, alongside work observed in their books and in lessons, show an upward trajectory of progress and standards, especially in English and science.
- Pupils currently in the school are benefiting from stronger teaching across a wide range of subjects. Teaching in English, mathematics and science is strong and this is evident in the work pupils are producing across all year groups. The progress that pupils are making in modern foreign languages and history is variable. However, leaders have taken effective action to improve outcomes in these subjects and there are clear signs of sustained improvement.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar, and in some subjects better, progress than that of other pupils nationally and in the school from their starting points.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good and in line with national expectations. Most make strong progress from their starting points and meet their individual targets. This is because of the effective planning, tracking of progress and teaching of these pupils.
- School progress information provided and Year 11 lessons sampled indicated that the most able pupils, including most able disadvantaged pupils, are making good progress.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stages of education, training or employment. There are many well-planned and carefully focused opportunities for pupils to engage in careers activities, for example, pupil interviews and university and employment events. Such activities begin early in their time at the school. Pupils in Year 9 and Year 10 benefit from trips to universities and places of work. Such opportunities increase their understanding and raise their aspirations.
- The minority of pupils that attend part-time alternative provision are making good progress on their courses. This is because the deputy headteacher, who leads on this aspect of the school's work, knows the pupils well and monitors their progress very carefully and effectively.
- The school's own monitoring information shows that pupils' progress in Year 8 is not as strong as that of other pupils across the school. Inspection evidence bears this out.
- The most able pupils across key stage 3 are not challenged well enough to achieve what is expected. School leaders are aware of this and have introduced effective strategies to secure improvements. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these strategies.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leadership of the sixth form is a strength. There is an ethos of high standards and expectations. This is evident with all staff and students.
- The head of sixth form has a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. He is proactive in bringing about improvements and he knows exactly what needs to be done to bring about future successes; he is taking

appropriate actions to improve weaker areas.

- The head of sixth form knows his students well and students acknowledge and value this. He meets with middle leaders to review students' progress on a regular basis and uses this information to target appropriate support for students so that they do not fall behind.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Relationships between staff and students are productive and supportive. Students speak highly of their teachers and state that they benefit from teachers knowing their strengths and what they need to do to succeed.
- Students benefit from supported study time. This time gives students the opportunity to work independently to consolidate knowledge and understanding and to practise skills in readiness for their examinations.
- The school provides a range of both academic and vocational courses and fully meets the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes. A minority of students benefit from studying a blend of academic and vocational courses and this allows them to access the qualifications they need for their future. A large proportion of students benefit from work experience and have been given opportunities to visit businesses and other organisations. This helps them in their future career choices. Leaders plan to extend work experience to all students.
- Students are proud of their school. They are mature and they are excellent role models for younger year groups. This is evident through opportunities to supervise young pupils at lunchtimes and on their journeys to and from school acting as 'bus marshals'.
- The sixth form is an inclusive environment where every student is valued and their views are recognised. They feel safe, and are safe. Students are well aware of the importance of regularly attending school and do so. Attendance is good.
- The provision for students' personal development and well-being is excellent. The sixth-form team provides a diverse enrichment programme alongside effective careers, advice and guidance programmes. Such programmes ensure that the vast majority of students complete the courses they start in Year 12 and they prepare students well for their next steps. Consequently, the proportion of students who move on to university, apprenticeships or employment opportunities is consistently high.
- Outcomes for students are good. This is because students are generally taught well and work hard. There are effective systems in place for monitoring their progress. Leaders acknowledge that there is further work to be done to secure how well students achieve in different subjects.
- All students who join the sixth form without having secured GCSEs in English and/or mathematics at grades A*–C are expected to study towards securing them. Successes have been variable, in particular in mathematics.

School details

Unique reference number	136770
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10031999

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 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	726
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	132
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Elizabeth Varley
Headteacher	Mr Nick Grieveson
Telephone number	01388 603388
Website	www.kingjames1academy.com
Email address	n.grieveson100@durhamlearning.net
Date of previous inspection	14–15 April 2015

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.
- This school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium funding is well above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average.
- In 2016, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- Some pupils attend alternative provision on a part-time basis. The school uses four providers: PACC at Windlestone Hall; Delta Independent School; Bishop Auckland College; and Education Plus.
- The school has a service level agreement with the local authority which is providing support in a range of subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in a variety of different lessons, of which a proportion were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors visited registration sessions and an assembly.
- Pupils' work was sampled informally in lessons across a wide range of subjects. A sample of pupils' work in Years 7, 8 and 9 for English, mathematics and science was also scrutinised.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents, including minutes of governing body meetings, records relating to behaviour and attendance, documents linked to safeguarding, monitoring information and information related to performance management.
- Meetings were held with pupils across all year groups, a group of governors, middle and senior leaders, a group of school staff and a representative from the local authority.
- An inspector spoke to two of the providers of alternative provision.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour both inside and outside the school building at social times. They also watched pupils entering and leaving the school site at the beginning and end of the school day.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 30 parents through the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the views of pupils and staff through discussions. No pupils or staff responded to the questionnaires.

Inspection team

Darren Stewart, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mark Evans	Her Majesty's Inspector
Karen Gammack	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen 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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