

Darton College

Ballfield Lane, Darton, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S75 5EF

Inspection dates

18–19 October 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders and managers lack the capacity to improve the school. For far too long, pupils have received a poor deal and have not made the progress they are capable of making.
- Leaders have failed to improve the quality of teaching. Weak and ineffective teaching and assessment, within departments and across the school, fails to meet the needs of pupils.
- Leaders have rightly acknowledged that key stage 4 outcomes were 'shocking'. This is the latest in a long line of depressingly poor achievement.
- Leaders have made poor curriculum decisions. Key stage 4 pupils are receiving fewer mathematics lessons at the very time they need them most.
- Leaders' plans for improvement are unwieldy and unrealistic and are a poor tool for driving rapid improvement.
- Middle leaders do not have an accurate grasp on the weaknesses in their departments. Training and professional support has not had a significant impact.
- Governors are failing to effectively hold leaders and managers to account. Governors do not have a close enough watch on the impact that additional funding is having on pupils' progress.
- Pupils' attendance is too low. Leaders have not done enough over time to improve this poor picture of performance.
- Progress, especially in key subjects, including English, mathematics and science, is inadequate.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and governors have successfully tackled the financial deficit and managed significant staff turnover.
- The school has an inclusive ethos and works hard to ensure that all pupils feel safe, secure and welcomed.
- Persistent absence rates are now in line with national averages.
- Leaders ensure that pupils, including the most vulnerable pupils, are safe.
- Nurture groups provide an effective support for vulnerable pupils and, because of improved teaching, the progress of many of these pupils is starting to improve.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve urgently the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, so that all pupils make good progress by:
 - making sure that information about pupils' attainment and progress is accurate
 - checking that teachers effectively use this information about pupils' learning to challenge all groups, especially the most able
 - improving the quality of improvement plans so that they have clear timescales, quantifiable measures and show clearly the impact actions will have on improving pupils' progress
 - making sure that governors play a clear role in objectively and regularly evaluating the impact leaders are having on improving the school
 - making sure that middle leaders are helped and supported in developing their skills in checking and improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - ensuring that appropriate professional development is planned and delivered that will help to rapidly improve the quality of teaching across the school
 - ensuring that the curriculum enables pupils to make better progress, especially in mathematics
 - making sure that governors fulfil their statutory duties, ensuring that additional funding has greater impact and the school website meets the Department for Education's requirements.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by making sure that:
 - all teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils
 - the quality of questioning and explanation improves so that pupils' misconceptions and difficulties can be identified and tackled quicker
 - teachers make effective use of accurate pupil assessment information to deliver teaching over time that is engaging and challenging, especially for boys, the most able, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities
 - teachers consistently follow the school assessment policy and ensure that pupils know how well they are achieving and act upon the feedback given to improve their progress, including their literacy skills.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - ensuring that the curriculum equips all pupils for life in modern Britain, including

the dangers of radicalisation and extremism

- making sure that all teachers have high expectations for pupils' behaviour in and out of lessons
 - improving pupils' attitudes to learning
 - using careers advice and guidance to raise pupils' expectations and ensure that they pursue suitably challenging pathways
 - analysing why different groups of pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, are not attending school regularly and devise suitable strategies to improve their attendance levels so that they are at least in line with national averages
 - providing older pupils with more effective opportunities to read for pleasure
 - evaluating the uptake of extra-curricular activities to help identify the extent to which they are meeting pupil needs and develop strategies to engage more pupils.
- Improve the support for vulnerable pupils by:
- ensuring that support for pupils with mental health issues is carefully evaluated and findings acted upon to further improve this provision.

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 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

Inadequate

- Leadership and management is inadequate. Pupil outcomes have been poor for a long time and leaders have had little impact on improving this sorrowful picture. Since the previous inspection, pupils have made inadequate progress in a number of key subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Over time, the leadership of teaching and learning has been weak and ineffective. There has been a lack of urgency and pace in tackling fundamental weaknesses in the quality of teaching. Timescales are unclear as to when teachers have to improve their teaching. As a result, teaching remains weak with only pockets of stronger practice to be found.
- Senior leaders have not been thorough enough in checking for themselves whether pupils are making rapid progress. They have relied too heavily on what middle leaders have told them. Often, middle leaders have been way off the mark in accurately checking pupils' progress. Consequently, leaders were devastated by the recent 2017 outcomes which were poor.
- Leaders do not have the capacity to improve the school. Despite successfully tackling the school deficit and creating an inclusive school ethos, issues identified in the previous inspection still remain alongside worrying longer-term trends of serious pupil underperformance. There is scant evidence that leaders have had any real impact on improving the progress pupils are making. The progress of the most able and disadvantaged pupils has been, and continues to be, depressingly low.
- Leaders have developed unwieldy and unconvincing plans for improvement. Plans lack focus. Leaders are not clear enough about what they should be tackling each term. As a result, they are trying to focus on too much. Improvement plans are unrealistic and impractical.
- Leaders do not have a clear enough view of what the intended impact of their actions will be. Targets in improvement plans are vague and imprecise. Alongside this, plans have few clear checkpoints along the way to help leaders and governors check whether improvements are on track.
- There has been a significant turnover of staff and many middle leaders are new to their roles. The quality of their own checks on learning and planning for improvement are not good enough. Too often, middle leaders have an over-optimistic view of how well they are doing in their roles despite evidence which clearly shows that pupils are making inadequate progress.
- Leaders have linked performance management to salary progression. Leaders have rightly refused some teachers a pay progression because of underperformance or failing to meet their targets. However, performance management is not proving an effective tool for improving teaching across the school. This is because the quality and impact of professional development and training has been weak. There has been little impact on improving teaching or pupils' progress. Leaders have very recently redesigned the training programme but it is too early to evaluate the impact of this.
- Although the curriculum offers pupils a broad range of subjects, it is not well designed

because senior leaders have made poor strategic decisions. Leaders have wrongly come to the view that pupils' progress in mathematics is improving at a sufficient rate that the number of lessons offered in key stage 4 could be reduced. Inspection evidence shows that the progress of pupils in mathematics remains inadequate, and now there is less teaching time for those pupils studying for their examinations.

- The curriculum does not provide equal opportunities for all pupils to be successful in their learning. Consequently, the progress of boys, disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEN and/or disabilities, and the most able has been poor over many years.
- During the last academic year, external support provided by other local schools had minimal impact. Early signs this term suggest that more effective help and support is now being provided. Local schools have begun the process of helping teachers improve the accuracy of their assessments.
- Local authority officers have been too slow and ineffective in formally communicating their concerns about the school's underperformance. The local authority has been reluctant to issue the school with a warning notice. While there is a planned meeting due to take place soon, for many pupils who have been at the school, this is too little too late.
- Leaders should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Governance of the school

- Governance in the school is ineffective. Governors do not challenge leaders well enough on the progress pupils make. The disastrous outcomes of 2017 were seen as a 'unique' event. They were not. Governors believe that leaders and managers have stemmed the tide of inadequacy. They have not.
- Governors sometimes struggle to decipher what information about pupils' attainment and progress is telling them. Governors struggle at times to see what the key messages are, arising from the various information presented to them. This is hindering their ability to challenge school leaders.
- Governors ask a range of questions during their meetings, but they rarely are incisive enough to get to the heart of the issue. Minutes from governing body meetings are unclear as to what actions have been agreed or how and when the impact of leaders' actions will be reviewed.
- Governors have some understanding of how additional funding is being spent but are much hazier on the impact it is having on pupils. They are unaware of how additional funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and children looked after is spent.
- Governors have not carefully evaluated the impact additional funding is having on disadvantaged pupils. Despite this group's poor progress, governors have not got to the bottom of why this considerable amount of additional funding is not having more of an effect.
- Governors do not meet all of their statutory duties. Governors were not aware that aspects of the school website were not compliant and that a number of important policies on the website were not ratified with dates for when they would be next reviewed.
- The local authority have recently appointed two new additional governors. It is too

early to evaluate whether this is having a positive impact.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. School leaders have worked hard to ensure that pupils are, and feel, safe. One pupil spoke for many when she said, 'there is always someone there for me'. Keeping pupils safe is seen as everyone's responsibility, including teachers, receptionists and lunchtime staff.
- Leaders have made sure that the single central record is kept up to date. It is well maintained and easy to navigate. Thorough checks, including references of newly appointed staff, are carried out prior to staff joining the school.
- Leaders ensure that training is timely and reflects issues within their local community, including the dangers of neglect, child sexual exploitation and grooming. Staff know that it is their duty to report any concern they have, no matter how big or small, and are not afraid to do so.
- Newly and recently qualified teachers, along with other teachers, have benefited from regular safeguarding training. Helpful quizzes are used to ensure that staff have understood the key messages from the latest Department for Education's guidance on 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'.
- Effective early help strategies are in place to support potentially vulnerable pupils and their families. Leaders have worked well with a range of external agencies and professionals to provide effective mental health support for some pupils. However, leaders recognise that they need to develop more sophisticated and accurate methods for checking whether this support is having the desired effect.
- Vulnerable pupils are well looked after in school. The local authority's virtual headteacher for children looked after does not play a proactive enough role in checking on whether this group of pupils are making sufficient progress. School leaders ensure that this group of pupils are well cared for and are safe while they are in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching over time is inadequate. Teaching is failing to meet the needs of pupils. The progress pupils make in a wide range of subjects is poor. The progress of boys, the most able, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has been weak over many years.
- Teachers do not use the information they have on pupils well enough. This leads to some pupils finding the work far too easy and lacking in challenge. For example, pupils in key stage 3 mathematics are needlessly repeating work that they covered in primary school.
- Teachers' expectations are too low. Work over time shows that, regardless of a pupil's ability, little thought or effort is given to stretching and challenging the most able. Teachers do not do enough to check pupils' understanding. Too often, teachers assume that because they have said it, pupils have learned it. Pupils commented that some teachers regularly struggled to explain things well enough, despite telling the teacher that they did not understand.

- The quality of teachers' questioning is often weak, undemanding and fails to deepen pupils' thinking. Pupils get little opportunity to explain at length what they are thinking. This leads to pupils' misconceptions going undetected and mistakes being made.
- Too many teachers do not provide helpful feedback in line with the school's assessment policy. Pupils can go for long stretches when they are unclear as to how well they are doing. When teachers do provide feedback, it is often not acted upon by pupils. This slows pupils' progress and leads to pupils repeating the same mistakes, including errors in spelling.
- There are some pockets of better teaching. In the 'nurture' groups, teachers know their pupils well and provide suitably challenging and engaging learning opportunities. As a result, pupils' progress is improving. Some teachers are more skilled at using questioning to probe and explore pupils' thinking and plan engaging and interesting sequences of lessons. This helps pupils, including the most able, explore and explain their thoughts and views and entices them to want to learn more.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. The curriculum does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to understand what it means to be a responsible citizen in modern Britain.
- For some pupils, form time is a missed opportunity to instil good learning habits. Pupils are allowed to idly chat, put their feet on chairs, or play with their mobile phones.
- Leaders have put much effort into helping pupils develop helpful ways of resolving arguments. This restorative approach is helping pupils understand how to manage their emotions and deal with resolving arguments peacefully.
- The curriculum helps pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, especially when using the internet. However, there are not enough opportunities to teach pupils about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.
- Leaders have made sure that careers guidance is provided to all pupils. This has ensured that the number of pupils who go on to further study, training or employment is high. However, this advice and guidance is not always sufficiently aspirational or ambitious. Not enough pupils progress on to more demanding courses when they leave school, despite having the ability to do so.
- Pupils have a range of opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Pupils have links with pupils in Nepal, and are involved in a range of charity fund-raising and local community events. This is helping them develop a greater appreciation of the world around them.
- A range of extra-curricular activities are offered but leaders do not analyse the participation rates well enough and so do not have an accurate grasp of whether they are meeting the interests of pupils.
- Younger pupils are developing an enthusiasm for reading. The librarian's record-keeping shows that those pupils in key stage 3 are keen to regularly read a range of different books. However, older pupils hardly use the library at all. Leaders have not

done enough to find out why this is so and what can be done to tackle it.

- Progress leaders work well with local primary schools to ensure that pupils entering Year 7 settle quickly. Inspectors agree both with pupils and with parents, who state that this is a strength of the school and helps their children quickly settle in to their new school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Pupils are usually compliant in lessons rather than engaged. Pupils generally follow the school rules, but too few of them have positive attitudes towards their learning. At times, they are too easily distracted, especially when the teacher is not nearby.
- The level of teacher expectation is sometimes set excessively low. Not enough pupils take enough care and pride in their work. Diagrams are often carelessly drawn, handwriting is sometimes too scruffy and titles are sometimes not neatly underlined with a ruler.
- Around school, and during breaktimes and lunchtimes, pupils generally behave well. They engage positively with staff and each other. Site managers report that pupils treat the building with respect and there is rarely any graffiti or vandalism. Older pupils report that they have seen improvements in the way poor behaviour is dealt with. However, not enough is being done to deal with the rowdy behaviour and bad language of some pupils on bus journeys to and from school.
- Learning environments can at times be too noisy and distracting because other pupils are talking when they should be working. Some pupils can be easily distracted and start playing on their mobile phones or daydreaming when they should be concentrating. Pupil, parental and staff feedback confirms the view that behaviour is not good enough.
- Elsewhere, pupils' behaviour is better. Pupils report that in these classrooms, teachers create a conducive environment for learning. This enables pupils to concentrate and work well.
- Attendance rates are not high enough. They remain below the national averages. Persistent absence rates have fallen and are in line with the national averages. Leaders have not done enough to explore why particular groups of pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, are not attending school regularly enough. Regular checks are made on those older pupils attending Barnsley College. As a result, these pupils are regularly attending college and are kept safe.
- Pupils generally feel that bullying issues are dealt with well. Pupils are encouraged to report bullying via the ABI (Anti Bullying Inbox). Through improved reporting and recording of bullying incidents, leaders are increasingly able to address different types of bullying, including verbal, physical, homophobic and online bullying.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Year 11 outcomes in 2017 form part of a long and depressing trend of inadequate

achievement over time. These outcomes were not, as leaders and managers assert, a 'unique' event which disrupted an improving trajectory of improvement.

- Despite headline attainment measures comparing favourably with national averages over time, this has masked the poor progress pupils have made in relation to their starting points.
- Since the previous inspection, a large proportion of pupils, including boys, the most able, disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, have failed to make the progress they should. This is because of poor teaching over time and low teacher expectations.
- The school's current assessment information shows that significant weaknesses still exist. There is widespread underachievement in a range of subjects at key stage 4, including English, mathematics, biology, physics, geography, Spanish, dance, graphics, and hospitality and catering.
- The progress pupils are making in key stage 3 is inadequate. Few pupils are achieving as well as they could. Despite the school being rich in data, it is not being used well enough to help pupils make more rapid progress.
- Leaders are making poor use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. At key stage 3, this group is currently not making good enough progress, especially in mathematics. In Year 11, disadvantaged pupils' progress is weak across a wide range of subjects.
- Until recently, the additional funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has been subsumed within the main school budget. Consequently, leaders have not directed this much needed funding to meet the additional needs of this group of pupils. Although the progress of this group is now starting to improve, it has remained below that of pupils with similar starting points nationally.
- Year 7 catch-up funding has helped those pupils improve their progress in reading and mathematics. It has had more of an impact in reading than in mathematics. Leaders have reviewed the impact of this work and sensible intervention plans are in place for this year. However, it is too soon to evaluate the impact of them.
- Pupils attending alternative provision are following suitable courses. Current progress is promising, given the short time they have been attending Barnsley College.

School details

Unique reference number	106651
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	10024020

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
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,152
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Holmes
Principal	Kate Davies
Telephone number	01226 382568
Website	http://dartoncollege.co.uk/
Email address	mail@dartoncollege.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 June 2013

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the content of its curriculum in each academic year for every subject on its website.
- Darton College is larger than the average-size secondary school.
- The principal was appointed in 2014 and is a national leader of education (NLE).
- The Barnsley Alliance has brokered support from local schools, including Penistone Grammar School and Horizon Community College.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average. The

proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is also above the national average.

- The school meets the government's 2016 floor standards, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has been identified by the Department for Education as a 'coasting school' because the standards pupils reached over the last three years have not been below the national standard.
- A small proportion of Year 11 pupils attend Barnsley College.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a wide range of evidence during the inspection, including through observations of teaching, many of which were undertaken jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work during lessons and sampled a wide range of pupils' written work.
- Inspectors held meetings with school staff, including the principal, other senior leaders and staff in charge of aspects of the school's work. Inspectors met with a group of newly and recently qualified teachers. They met with the governing body and held phone meetings with the lead officer for the Barnsley Alliance and the virtual headteacher for children looked after.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in formal interviews, during lessons and informally at lunchtimes and breaktimes.
- Inspectors considered a large range of documentation related to the school's work, gaining the school's view of its performance and information concerning pupils' attainment, progress and attendance.
- Inspectors scrutinised records concerning safeguarding, pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors analysed 241 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also took into account 58 staff survey responses, 64 pupil responses and 219 written responses from parents.

Inspection team

Phil Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Steve Rogers	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Cook	Ofsted Inspector
George Gilmore	Ofsted Inspector
Gordon Watts	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Tull	Her Majesty's 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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