

Excelsior Academy

Denton Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE15 6AF

Inspection dates

28–29 November 2017

| Overall effectiveness | Requires improvement |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Requires improvement |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Requires improvement |
| Early years provision | Good |
| 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

- Teaching is inconsistent. While a majority of teaching is good, some teachers do not have high expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve.
- Not enough of the most able pupils reach the standards of which they are capable.
- The progress made by pupils in the primary provision over time is variable.
- Some teachers do not use assessment information effectively to plan learning that meets pupils' needs and do not establish if pupils understand their work.
- Senior and middle leaders in some subjects have not acted quickly enough to improve standards and accelerate progress.
- Outcomes in science at the end of key stage 4 are not good enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders are intent on ensuring that pupils make good progress in their learning. They have managed the formidable challenges of rapid growth and turbulence, and the increasingly complex difficulties faced by pupils, with astonishing tenacity. They are acting quickly to address remaining variability in teaching and outcomes over time.
- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is both broad and balanced. Appropriate time is given to academic study. Innovative pathways to learning help pupils who are new to English to make rapid progress and access an education.
- The pastoral care of pupils is highly effective. Pupils say they feel very safe and value the support they receive.
- Leaders' comprehensive range of training and their support for staff are helping to bring about improvements in teaching quickly.
- Children in the early years thrive because they feel safe and secure. Accurate assessment of children's needs helps staff to plan challenging lessons. As a result, they make good progress.
- Leaders ensure that sixth-form students study appropriate courses. Good teaching results in students' good outcomes at the end of their study programmes.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good by:
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment information well to plan learning activities which meet the different needs of pupils from different starting points
 - strengthening teachers' understanding and expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve so that learning activities will enable them to fulfil their potential
 - ensuring that teachers use probing questioning more systematically to challenge and deepen pupils' thinking and check their understanding, so that their learning is secure.
- Improve the outcomes for pupils by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders and middle leaders of all subject areas, particularly those in science, improve and accelerate the progress of all pupils in each key stage, including the most able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have high expectations of all pupils and staff. They are passionate about giving pupils opportunities to learn and for them to achieve their very best. Leaders have a deep understanding of the increasingly complex needs of their community. They lead by example and a culture of kindness, respect and tolerance permeates the whole school.
- The school has grown by over a third since the last inspection. Substantial numbers of pupils also arrive during the year, many with significant social and emotional needs. Some speak no English on arrival and others have no experience of education. Many are fleeing from war zones: 181 pupils arrived during the last academic year; 84 have arrived already since September. Excelsior Academy is a truly diverse and welcoming community for all.
- Leaders have ensured that pastoral and welfare systems within the school are strong and, as a result, pupils are increasingly ready and able to learn. Staff provide pupils with substantial help and support. Pastoral leaders are highly effective and work closely with multiple outside agencies to try to ensure that pupils' basic needs are met.
- Leaders promote equality of opportunity and diversity in everything they do. As a result of this, all pupils are accepted and welcomed into this diverse community with ease. Pupils say that any incidents of discriminatory or prejudiced behaviour are rare and that everyone gets on.
- Performance management of teaching staff is rigorous and reflects both the school's priorities and teachers' professional development needs.
- Leaders with responsibility for special educational needs are beginning to transform provision. Pupils' needs are carefully identified and assessed. This is leading to improvements in the provision, and the support pupils receive is increasingly helping pupils to make better progress in lessons.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding carefully and effectively. It is precisely targeted to meet the needs of individual pupils. Funding is often used to meet welfare needs and support pupils' emotional health and well-being. Without these interventions, learning would falter. It is also used to enable pupils to take part in enrichment activities beyond the curriculum. Pupils also benefit from extra support in English and mathematics. The impact of the funding is seen through the good engagement of pupils in their learning.
- The Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium is used well to support low-ability pupils to make substantial gains in their reading ages and to improve their mathematical skills.
- The primary physical education (PE) and sport premium funding is well used. Pupils have a wide range of activities from which to choose and are able to participate in sports throughout the whole day, including during breaktimes and lunchtimes. Teachers firmly believe that this provision has a positive impact on pupils, seen through improved self-confidence and physical and emotional well-being.

- The curriculum is both broad and balanced in every key stage. In the past, too little time was given to the study of science, humanities and languages, particularly at key stage 3. Leaders have now addressed this while maintaining breadth in learning, with technical and artistic subjects widely offered.
- In the primary phase, the curriculum is developed through appropriate themes. This approach widens pupils' experiences of the world and helps learning to become highly relevant. Links are made through each theme to subject-specific areas of learning. For example, visits to the 'forest school' are used to develop pupils' writing based on their real-life experiences. In both the primary and the secondary schools, the curriculum is complemented by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sports, music and theatre.
- The school is innovative in its approach to the teaching and learning of the English language. Pupils who arrive at the school with little or no English are immersed in the language and taught how to read and write in English, before joining lessons with their year groups. In the primary phase, support is through small-group learning while taking part in lessons with their peers.
- The school recently held a 'British values' day where every lesson was used to develop understanding of values fundamental to modern British society. The clear and successful focus of learning was to develop mutual respect among pupils and to develop a deep understanding of both the rule of law and individual liberty. During 'Make a difference' tutor time, pupils have regular opportunities to reflect upon and discuss difficult issues, such as the Westminster bombings, immigration and Brexit.
- All teachers take responsibility for developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The positive impact of this approach is seen readily throughout the school. Pupils work well together and both respect and value the cultural backgrounds of this diverse school community.
- Leaders and governors have a very accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are already acting on areas of weakness but know time is needed before recent actions will secure improvement in pupils' achievements.
- Staff benefit from a wide range of professional development opportunities to help them develop their teaching and to support those with leadership responsibilities. Weekly monitoring of the quality of teaching by subject leaders quickly identifies where additional guidance is needed. Teaching is improving quickly as variability is reduced. In science, historical difficulties with recruitment have caused challenges over time. Newly qualified teachers in science report that they are very well supported and value the development opportunities available to them.
- Senior and middle leaders have developed a new model for assessing and tracking the progress pupils make in the secondary schools. They have clearly defined the learning that is appropriate for pupils of differing abilities and aptitudes in each subject. Teachers are expected to plan to meet the needs of pupils and use the information provided. Leaders know that both the most able and middle-ability pupils do not make the progress they should. Inspection evidence shows some impact of this new strategy in lessons, but further time is needed until internal assessment data shows sustained impact on progress. Systems for accurately monitoring the progress of pupils who have no prior attainment are less well developed.

Governance of the school

- Governors and trustees successfully hold leaders to account for the performance of the school. They are astute, know the school well and understand the unique challenges faced daily by leaders. They are uncompromising in their drive for excellent outcomes and provide strong support and challenge to leaders.
- Regular visits to the school take place so that governors can check progress in different areas for themselves. They are careful to ensure that all targeted funding is well used for the intended pupils.
- Governors carry out their statutory duties with care and check safeguarding arrangements personally. They attend regular training and take the time to be involved in the life of the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet statutory requirements. The school's safeguarding policies and practices are very strong. All staff have been trained in safeguarding and child protection. They are vigilant and know exactly what to do if they believe that a child is at risk. A culture of safeguarding runs throughout the school.
- Leaders work effectively with parents and work closely with external agencies to safeguard pupils. They ensure that all concerns and referrals are followed up carefully and quickly by staff.
- Leaders are on their guard regarding children potentially missing from education. High numbers of pupils move in and out of the school during any one year. Leaders are vigilant in ensuring that the right agencies are informed quickly to make sure that pupils are safe. This includes checking on pupils who have returned to their home countries.
- Leaders are proactive in protecting pupils from radicalisation and extremism. Staff are thoroughly trained and actively encourage open discussion with pupils so that they can help them understand how to keep themselves safe. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe from threats, ranging from sexual exploitation and the dangers of the internet and mobile technology to keeping safe on the roads.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies too much across the school. This leads to varying rates of progress across subjects and for groups of pupils. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement to be consistently good.
- Some teaching is less effective because teachers do not consider, routinely, the prior attainment of their pupils or their own assessments of their progress. As a result, assessment information is not used well to inform planning for learning that is matched closely to the needs of pupils.
- Teachers do not have consistently high expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve. These pupils know they could manage more challenging work. Expectations

tend to be appropriate for low-ability pupils but they are too low for those in the middle. The impact over time is that most-able pupils, and, to a lesser extent, middle-ability pupils, do not make the good progress of which they are capable.

- Questioning is used skilfully in most lessons to probe pupils' understanding, identify misconceptions and then reshape explanations. Pupils' thoughtful responses help the teacher to ensure that they gain a better understanding of a new skill or concept. In some lessons, however, teachers' questioning is less successful. Pupils' understanding is simply assumed, despite too many pupils being unclear about what they are learning.
- Pupils in most classes show a real interest in their learning and are committed to working hard. They are keen to participate, work well in groups and will readily work things out for themselves.
- Pupils use feedback from their teachers well and are keen to improve. They value the efforts of their teachers to help them and good relationships are evident everywhere in the school. In some lessons, however, pupils say they are frustrated because they cannot make progress due to teaching that is poorly planned and organised. These lessons sometimes lead to incidents of low-level misbehaviour.
- Leaders use assessment information and detailed knowledge of pupils' learning needs to provide additional, focused lessons to help them learn. This is particularly effective for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Over time, they make good progress. It is also very effective for low-ability pupils, who sometimes need to work in small groups or one-to-one with an adult.
- All teachers maintain a careful focus on language and literacy. Every opportunity is taken to ensure that pupils understand key words and phrases. This helps pupils who struggle with English to develop their vocabulary.
- In many lessons, teachers use time productively and pupils learn effectively because tasks are clear and well explained. Teachers take care to ensure that pupils gain a strong understanding of mathematical concepts. There are increasing opportunities for pupils throughout the school to tackle interesting, open-ended and more challenging problems.
- The systematic teaching of phonics knowledge and skills in the primary phase is strong. The skills of the most able readers are developing well and they have a range of strategies to work out the meaning of difficult vocabulary. The weakest readers use phonics to sound out simple words but struggle with understanding the meaning of what they have read.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the primary school has improved rapidly and teachers are making sure pupils overcome a legacy of weaker teaching. Leaders know there is more to do to make sure pupils' progress is consistently good.
- Learning is enriched through a range of extra-curricular trips and visits. Primary pupils particularly enjoy trips to Beamish and Kielder Forest and visits to the cinema.
- Parents receive regular reports and say they are happy with the progress their children are making.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Harmonious relationships are seen across the whole school. Pupils and teachers treat each other with mutual respect. There is a real and deep understanding of both difference and community. Pupils take care of each other and have a living understanding of the values that underpin modern Britain.
- Pupils report that there is very little bullying. If it does take place, teachers deal with it firmly and decisively. It is not repeated. Pupils know that there are many forms of bullying, including cyber bullying and homophobic bullying and that bullying people is wrong. They know what they need to do to keep themselves safe. Pupils are adamant that there is no use of derogatory or aggressive language in the school.
- The school provides a wealth of emotional support through counsellors and mentors. They help pupils manage the difficulties and challenges that they face, so that they are able and ready to learn in the classroom. Pupils greatly value the support they have from staff. They all say, without any doubt, that they feel safe and well cared for.
- Pupils are taught how to eat healthily, through lessons, and they have opportunities to keep physically fit, through lessons and the wide range of extra-curricular activities available.
- Pupils want to learn and understand why it is so important. They value the work of staff in helping them. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning are particularly strong in the primary school. This is evident in most lessons, especially when learning is well planned and meets their needs.
- Older pupils value the impartial careers guidance they receive, which helps them to make choices regarding their future. They know that it is their education that will give them a choice in their future.
- The school is vigilant in checking that the very small number of pupils in alternative provision are safe. They are confident that pupils are making good progress in learning, in managing their behaviour and in developing positive attitudes to learning.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent in the primary school is higher than average due to the numbers who must remain on roll for a time after they have left. This is so that the school can check that they are safe before removing them from the school roll.
- The school provides valued help to families in times of need. This includes helping to ensure that pupils attend by providing transport. This ensures that routines of attendance are not broken and that pupils do not fall behind in their learning.
- The school is an orderly, calm and safe environment. In the secondary schools, on occasions, pupils are a little too boisterous but quickly respond to directions from their

teachers. In the primary school, a calm, safe atmosphere pervades the building.

- The school has effective systems for managing behaviour. In the primary setting, time is taken to help pupils understand the need to choose the right way to behave. In the secondary phase, they are underpinned by the caring, family atmosphere of their 'schools within a school' model, where teachers know the pupils well and expectations of good behaviour are high.
- In most lessons, pupils behave well even if the lesson is not fully meeting their learning needs. In a very small number of lessons, though, some pupils do not behave as well as they should. In these lessons, the planned learning is not meeting pupils' needs.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The outcomes for pupils require improvement in the secondary phase because of the variability in pupils' progress between subjects and between groups of pupils. The outcomes for pupils require improvement in the primary phase because of the weaker rates of progress in some year groups due to historical instability of staffing. This said, recent improvements in the quality of teaching are already improving matters.
- The progress that primary pupils make over time in national assessments at the end of key stage 2 is not yet good. Most pupils leaving Year 6 in summer 2017 arrived at the school during Years 5 or 6 and most had no prior attainment. Pupils had real difficulties in catching up to age-related expectations. Attainment at the end of key stage 1 was also very low.
- The progress that secondary pupils make in science is not good enough, both in lessons and external examinations. This is because of turbulence in leadership and staffing over time. While senior leaders are working to resolve difficulties, their actions have yet to have a sustained impact.
- The progress that secondary pupils make in geography is also not good enough, although plans to improve are more advanced. Inspection evidence shows improvements are beginning to be made.
- The most able pupils significantly and consistently underperform over time in their GCSE examinations. Those with average prior attainment tend to underachieve, although those with low prior attainment make consistently good progress. These trends were evident in lessons, in books and in internal data analysis of the current Years 10 and 11, and they are clearly identified in the school's own documentation.
- In English at key stage 3, internal assessments show that many pupils struggle to make good progress often from very low starting points in both written and spoken English. In English at key stage 4, progress is stronger, as seen both in lessons and through internal assessments.
- In mathematics, internal assessments show that pupils make good progress in key stage 3. Progress in the GCSE examinations in 2016 was above average, although average in 2017. Current assessment data for Year 11 shows pupils to be making better progress than last year.
- Across the whole school, 55% of pupils are disadvantaged, 31% have SEN and/or disabilities and 49% speak English as an additional language. Consequently, there are many overlaps when considering the progress made by different groups of pupils and

many variations in these proportions from one year to another.

- The progress that disadvantaged pupils make in key stages 3 and 4 is slightly less than other pupils. Provisional data from the GCSE examinations in 2017 shows progress to be at least in line with other disadvantaged pupils nationally.
- The school's analysis of the current progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities shows that they are struggling to make good progress in English at key stage 3. The special educational needs team is already addressing this to restore good progress. These pupils are making better progress at key stage 4.
- Pupils at the end of key stage 4 are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. The school takes care that each pupil has received independent careers advice and guidance and that they have appropriate routes for their progression. For those who are new to English and arrive during key stage 4, the school has a bespoke pathway, so that they can continue to be supported by the school and move on to gain GCSE qualifications.
- Leaders in the primary phase have taken effective action to bring about improvements for their pupils. Staffing has been stabilised. All pupils are now catching up quickly and more are now working within age-related expectations. Gaps in their learning are now closing.
- In the primary school, disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 are making good progress in catching up with their peers where they had fallen behind. In key stage 2, as with other pupils, progress is improving.
- Pupils in the primary school who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress when accessing support that is targeted to their individual needs. This good progress falters a little in the classroom if teaching is not carefully targeted to move them on quickly from their starting points.
- The most able pupils are sometimes given work that is more challenging. In key stage 2, for example, pupils enjoyed tackling complex mathematical problems and they are beginning to make better progress.
- The outcomes of the 2017 phonics screening check are just below national averages. A third of the pupils speak English as an additional language and most are disadvantaged. The support given to pupils has allowed most to meet the national expectations from their starting points. Phonics skills are constantly revisited and embedded as pupils move into Year 2 and then into key stage 2.
- Pupils in the primary school read regularly and enjoy reading. This extends into key stage 3 where mentors encourage pupils to read each week for pleasure. Pupils value the opportunities to access books.
- Pupils' progress in English across the whole school is a constant focus. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is far higher than that seen nationally and pupils' levels of literacy on entry to the school are very low. Staff throughout the school use every opportunity to help pupils develop a good understanding of the English language in all areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership of the early years is good. Leaders are keenly aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and know exactly what to do to improve further.
- The provision is a warm and nurturing environment. It is stimulating, exciting and bursting with activity and learning and, because of this, children make good progress. Children feel safe and they are very confident with the adults who take care of them and help them to learn.
- Children learn in a climate of respect, which promotes effective learning. They are well behaved and enjoy good relationships with adults and other children. They quickly learn to work and play together.
- Children start Nursery and Reception with a wide range of abilities and skills. Carefully planned activities ensure that learning is closely matched to children's varying needs. As a result, they make good progress from their starting points. The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development at the end of Reception is above average.
- Accurate and precise assessment of children's learning enables teachers to identify any specific, individual needs. Teachers then plan carefully targeted activities, sometimes using specialist staff, to swiftly move learning forwards.
- Leaders and teachers provide support on a daily basis for the complex social and emotional needs among many of the children, some of whom arrive in the provision speaking no English. Leaders' actions ensure that they are able to thrive.
- Leaders have developed a curriculum that captures the imagination and interest of children. Staff plan engaging activities carefully in order to ensure that pupils can access all areas of learning. Children delight in the wide range of rich learning experiences and, as a result, make good progress.
- Good teaching ensures that children get off to a good start in phonics, reading, writing and mathematics. All adults have high expectations of children. They know there is not a moment to lose and learning takes place at a good pace.
- Children are encouraged to identify and manage risks and also to plan and think carefully about their work.
- The early years staff work closely with parents so that they are involved in their children's learning. Staff encourage parents to share, with them, observations of their children's progress in the home environment. This helps staff to build a very clear picture of children's development so that they can move learning forwards.
- Children who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of a strong focus by adults on children's specific needs. In some instances, adults use Makaton, a system to support children who have greater difficulties with language and communication.
- The work of leaders to support the learning needs of children supported by the pupil premium funding is unique to each child. As a result, the impact of the funding is to help remove barriers to learning. This underpins the good progress seen by the children in this setting.

- There are arrangements for ensuring that the safety of children and all welfare requirements are met. Child protection procedures are routinely and carefully followed.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leaders are totally committed to securing the best outcomes for learners. They regularly monitor the quality of teaching, which is good, seeking always to improve provision. They keep a very close eye on the progress of learners and act quickly to support any student who is struggling. Learners are appreciative of the support they receive from their teachers.
- Highly individual study programmes are tailored to learners' needs and prior attainment. Learners taking courses in GCSE English and mathematics make good progress. These courses run not only for those who need to resit but also for those who were new to English in key stage 4 or have arrived since with no equivalent qualifications.
- Leaders have high expectations for all learners and this is coupled with a deep understanding of the need to ensure that learners study on appropriate pathways that will meet their needs. The impact is that the attendance of learners at the college has improved over time and is now good.
- Increasingly, learners complete their courses, although a significant proportion do move into employment, to further education and to apprenticeships, either at the end of Year 12 or mid-year. The vast majority of those in Year 13 complete their courses and are ready to move on successfully to higher education, employment or training when they leave.
- Leaders have developed an innovative curriculum that offers learners a wide range of options within four main routes, depending on their achievements at the end of Year 11 and their experience of the English language. As a result, all learners are able to study on appropriate pathways leading to future employment.
- Preparation for future education and employment lies at the heart of the curriculum. The quality of careers education, information, advice and guidance is strong and effective. Almost all learners take part in work experience and have clear plans for their futures.
- Progress in applied general qualifications is above average over time. Progress in academic qualifications in 2016 was above average and, in 2017, most learners continued to make good progress. Internal data shows that current learners are continuing this good trend.
- Learners treat each other and staff with respect. They say they feel safe and feel they have been well educated regarding how to keep themselves safe. They value the range of visitors who come to talk to them in assemblies. The police recently spoke to them about dangers to beware of when driving.
- Learners are able to take part in a whole host of activities that enrich their learning and broaden their horizons. There are exciting visits to Geneva, Sri Lanka and Iceland. Sixteen learners are currently taking part in Duke of Edinburgh award schemes and others act as student mentors, helping others in the school.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 135423 |
| Local authority | Newcastle upon Tyne |
| Inspection number | 10036525 |

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

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| Type of school | All-through |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1,498 |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes | 214 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair | Mohammad Farsi |
| Executive principal | Craig Taylor |
| Telephone number | 01912 288400 |
| Website | www.excelsiornewcastle.org.uk |
| Email address | admin@excelsiornewcastle.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | January 2013 |

Information about this school

- The school became one 'all-through' academy in September 2013 with the addition of a primary school. Pupils aged 3 to 11 years old are now educated in 'Rainbird Primary School' within the academy. Secondary pupils are educated in three small schools within the academy: Collingwood, Hadrian and Milburn Schools. Students aged 16 to 19 years are educated in Excelsior College within the academy.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above average and is currently 55% of the school population.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well above average and

over 30% of the school.

- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average and is currently 49% of the school population.
- The school is significantly larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- More than 50% of students are from ethnic groups other than White British and the school comprises at least 13 ethnic groups.
- The school has grown by at least 100 pupils a year overall since the last inspection.
- During any given year, approximately 200 pupils arrive and another 200 leave. This turbulence is concentrated in key stages 3 and 4.
- Excelsior Academy is part of the Laidlaw Schools Trust, which is a multi-academy trust. Governance arrangements for the trust include the members, the board of directors and the local governing board. Management responsibilities reside with the chief executive officer, the executive principal and his senior leadership team and managers within the Laidlaw Schools Trust's head office.
- A very small number of pupils attend alternative provision. Providers include TLG Newcastle, Newcastle Bridges School, Newcastle College, Princes Trust, and Rathbone Training.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of key stage 4. It does not meet the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website about the curriculum followed by pupils in key stage 3.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The executive principal took up post in January 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the executive principal, the headteacher of Rainbird Primary School, two principals of the secondary schools, the college principal, senior leaders and middle leaders.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with the chair of the local governing board and the chief executive officer of the Laidlaw Trust.
- Inspectors observed learning across a wide range of subjects and age groups and scrutinised samples of pupils' written work. Many of these observations and activities were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's review of its own performance and development plans, analyses of pupils' progress and minutes of governors' meetings. They considered a range of documentation in relation to child protection, safeguarding, attendance and behaviour.
- Meetings were held with several different pupil groups from key stages 2, 3 and 4. Inspectors spoke with pupils informally in lessons, at breaktime and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read from Years 2, 4, 6 and 7.
- Inspectors analysed the 28 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and 14 written comments. They also considered 115 staff and 68 pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Janice Gorlach, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| John Downs | Ofsted Inspector |
| Carl Sugden | Ofsted Inspector |
| Ann Muxworthy | Ofsted Inspector |
| Catherine Garton | Ofsted Inspector |
| Karen Gammack | 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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