

Berwick Academy

Adams Drive, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland TD15 2JF

Inspection dates

30–31 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders have failed to improve the school sufficiently since the previous inspection. They have been too slow to tackle weaknesses in teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils' outcomes are inadequate. Pupils underachieve significantly at key stage 4. Too many, including those who are disadvantaged and the most able, are failed by the school.
- Teaching has not improved rapidly enough since the last inspection. There is significant variation in the quality of teachers' questioning and the development of pupils' literacy skills.
- Leaders did not anticipate the poor 2017 GCSE results because they believed that pupils were doing better than they actually were.
- While leaders have developed plans for improvement, there is little evaluation of the success of actions taken. Leaders are unable to say with confidence what works well.
- Governors are failing to hold leaders and managers to account effectively. Governors do not have a close enough watch on the impact additional funding is having on pupils' progress.
- Teachers have not assessed pupils' work accurately. The expectations for what pupils, and especially boys, are able to achieve in lessons are too low.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour, in and out of class, are not always positive and very often their behaviour is inadequate. Pupils regularly disrupt lessons and not all teachers have confidence in the school's behaviour management system.
- Too many pupils are regularly absent from school. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is especially low. Leaders have not been successful in putting into place actions to improve attendance rapidly enough.
- Leaders have not ensured that the safeguarding arrangements in the school are effective. Pupils have been put at risk.

The school has the following strengths

- The sixth-form provision now better matches the needs of students. Students make good progress from their starting points, particularly in vocational subjects.
- The school makes effective use of the funding available to support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

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?

- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, so that all pupils make good progress by:
 - ensuring that teachers use information about pupils' prior attainment more effectively to plan specifically for pupils' different abilities, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able
 - removing the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school
 - making sure that evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning made by all leaders are accurate
 - ensuring that leaders raise their expectations of what pupils can and should achieve
 - ensuring that senior leaders and governors plan effectively to diminish the differences in outcomes and attendance between disadvantaged pupils and those of other pupils nationally
 - checking that the use of extra funding to support disadvantaged pupils is rigorously evaluated
 - making sure that the governing body is more effective at holding leaders to account by checking carefully that agreed actions have had sufficient impact.
- Further develop the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that all groups of pupils make strong progress across a wide range of subjects by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have high expectations for what pupils can achieve across all subjects and year groups
 - use the school's systems for managing behaviour consistently well and that lessons constantly engage pupils in their learning
 - develop their questioning skills so that they ask probing questions that help all pupils, including boys and disadvantaged pupils in particular, to deepen their understanding and provide extended oral responses
 - make effective use of accurate pupil assessment information to deliver teaching over time that is engaging and challenging, including for boys, the most able and disadvantaged pupils
 - check that pupils understand clearly how well they are achieving and what they need to improve, in line with the school's marking and assessment policy
 - consistently tackle and support pupils' weaknesses in literacy

- share the good practice that is already available in the school.
- Urgently act to develop a culture of safeguarding in the school through improving pupils' behaviour and attendance by ensuring that:
 - all adults consistently apply the school's behaviour policy and challenge any poor behaviour around the school site
 - all pupils and groups of pupils attend school at rates similar to or better than the national averages, including disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - greater attention is paid to checking that actions taken by the school and other professionals and agencies are having the desired impact and are shared effectively with all those involved to inform the school's approaches to safeguarding pupils
 - the school develops a transparent and open approach that ensures that pupils, parents and carers are confident that safeguarding concerns are dealt with and resolved.

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 are inadequate. Pupils' outcomes have been poor for a long time and leaders have not secured a good standard of education in the school. Since the last inspection, standards have declined rapidly. The examination results in 2017 fell into the bottom 10% nationally. Pupils' attainment and progress were low in a number of subjects, including English, mathematics, history and geography.
- Leaders have not improved teaching. This is partly because there has not been an insistence that staff and pupils follow the school's behaviour and assessment policies. There is little 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, poor.
- The school has found it difficult to recruit sufficient teachers in some subjects. This, in addition to staff absences, means that many classes are staffed by temporary teachers. Parents and pupils have attributed pupils' poor behaviour and progress to this lack of continuity in teaching. Leaders have failed to monitor and support the work of temporary teachers well enough.
- Leaders, including governors, do not ensure sufficient accountability for the use of additional funds to support disadvantaged pupils. They have failed to commission an external review of the school's use of this pupil premium funding, despite this being a key recommended action from the previous inspection. In the absence of this evaluation, leaders are unable to say which strategies are effective in supporting pupils' learning and progress.
- The management of attendance is inadequate. Far too many pupils are regularly absent from school. The school's efforts to ensure that effective systems are in place to improve pupils' attendance have not had the significant impact needed.
- Leaders have not demonstrated that they have sufficient capacity to improve the school. Actions they have taken have been too slow and ineffective, or are too recent to have had sufficient effect.
- Despite developing programmes to improve pupils' reading, key stage 4 pupils told inspectors that they have fewer opportunities to read than when they first joined the school. However, the pupils who read to inspectors were able to decode unfamiliar words and had an appropriate understanding of the text.
- Middle leaders have started to manage their areas of responsibility effectively. They have only recently taken on more responsibility for the quality of teaching in their departments. They have begun to hold teachers to account for pupils' outcomes. Leaders have not embedded systems for accountability consistently well across all departments. Recently, there has been improved oversight in English following the appointment of new middle leaders.
- The school uses events and displays around the school to raise pupils' awareness of anti-bullying strategies and about possible future careers. However, these approaches are insufficiently embedded in the curriculum to make a consistent and positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- The curriculum offers breadth and balance and the opportunity for many to follow the English Baccalaureate at key stage 4. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities that match pupils' interests. Pupils spoke positively about opportunities to be involved in sports teams and the arts.
- The external funding to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is used well. The leadership of this area has ensured a clear focus and a thorough and accurate understanding of strengths, as well as an honest evaluation of weaknesses.
- It is strongly recommended that the school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Governance of the school

- Governance is inadequate. Governors have not done enough to prevent the decline in the school's performance. Although there is some evidence of challenge in the minutes of governing body meetings, governors have too readily accepted inaccurate and unsupported information from leaders about pupils' achievement. The commitment of the governors is clear but they have no improvement record upon which to build.
- Governors have not ensured that pupil premium funding has been used to good effect to help disadvantaged pupils make progress in line with other pupils nationally.
- Governors have ensured that the website and policies meet all statutory requirements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. Although policies and procedures relating to safeguarding are now fit for purpose, there is not a culture of safeguarding in the school. The school has not developed a transparent and open approach that ensures that pupils and parents are confident that safeguarding concerns are dealt with and resolved.
- While pupils say that they are safe and that bullying is rare, a number of incidents of bullying and other safeguarding concerns were raised by parents and school staff during the inspection.
- Leaders are not tackling poor behaviour head-on. Inspectors witnessed pupils pushing, shoving and running in corridors, as well as disregarding instructions from teachers to stop.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching over time is inadequate. Few pupils make the progress they should. Teachers' expectations vary across the school and within departments. Work over time shows that some teachers too often accept low standards of work from pupils. Teachers do not consistently tackle pupils over poorly presented work that shows a lack of care, effort or pride.
- Teachers' planning has not been based on an accurate evaluation of pupils' knowledge and understanding. As a result, teachers have not challenged the most able, including

the most able disadvantaged pupils. Equally, they have not provided effective support for low prior-attaining pupils so that they can achieve well.

- The quality of teachers' questioning is often weak and undemanding and it fails to deepen pupils' thinking. Teachers do not give pupils enough time to explain what they are thinking. Often, the teacher will then provide the required answer.
- Pupils' literacy and speaking skills are underdeveloped. This is because teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to give extended answers or to write at length. Pupils repeatedly make spelling errors and teachers fail to tackle these successfully. As a result, too many pupils are not able to express themselves well. Pupils complain that their learning is routinely interrupted by low-level disruption in lessons. They feel that teachers are inconsistent in their approach to managing behaviour.
- The teaching of history and geography is weak. Pupils are often given undemanding work that is too easy for them. For instance, inspectors saw examples of Year 9 work in history where the most able pupils were given tasks with little challenge. This limits their progress.
- Too many teachers do not explain to pupils how to take the next steps in their learning. While leaders' guidance is effectively applied in some subjects, particularly in design technology, it is not applied well in others. As a result of new leadership of English, the quality of teaching in this subject has improved quickly.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- While pupils say that they feel safe, they also report concerns about behaviour in lessons and around the school. Some parents have expressed their concerns about bullying and poor behaviour, despite school records showing few incidents.
- Pupils are not developing self-confidence and positive attitudes to learning. Too few pupils engage effectively with learning. Pupils told inspectors that they cannot learn due to interruptions from other pupils. Inspectors witnessed pupils making silly noises in lessons when other pupils were answering the teacher's questions.
- Punctuality to lessons is poor for a significant minority of pupils. School staff say this is improving.
- Information about next steps in terms of further education or training is impartial and well delivered. As a result, pupils are able to pursue courses that are a good match for their interests, aspirations and abilities when they leave school at the end of Year 11. The proportion that are not in education, employment or training after that point is similar to the national average.
- Pupils who attend the school's alternative provision resource, The Eden Centre, feel secure and work in a well-ordered environment with good resources, small class sizes and specialist teachers. This often provides a safe haven for pupils who are experiencing difficulties. Pupils continue with their work while in The Eden Centre, which prevents them from falling behind.

- Pupils spoke positively about the support they receive from the school-based counsellor, whom they respect and trust.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate. The school's behaviour policy is ineffective. Staff do not apply the policy in a consistent manner.
- Pupils' behaviour has not been managed well. The views of pupils and their parents, confirmed by what teachers say, indicate that the number of incidents of poor behaviour is high. The school's own records of bullying suggest that these incidents are rare, but this does not match the number of concerns about bullying and poor behaviour expressed by parents and pupils.
- In too many lessons, pupils find it difficult to maintain their concentration and interest and often become disruptive when learning does not interest them. Pupils who spoke with inspectors described behaviour as a constant issue that disrupts their learning every day.
- The work set for most-able pupils in class does not routinely engage and challenge them or reflect their targets. Inspectors met with a group of most-able pupils from Year 11, including those who are disadvantaged, and these pupils said they felt safe at school and supported in their learning.
- When teaching is better matched to pupils' abilities, pupils are motivated and keen to work hard. In many uninspiring lessons, pupils just sit quietly. In some of these lessons, however, inspectors did see examples of very poor behaviour from a small minority of pupils.
- Pupils sometimes move around the school calmly but pupils say that this is not always the case. Some pupils do not respond quickly to staff instructions, putting themselves and others at risk. A significant number of pupils do not show respect for each other or for staff and visitors. Pupils frequently use foul language and this is not always tackled by teachers.
- Pupils, parents and staff agree that behaviour by some pupils is poor and members of staff responding to the inspection questionnaire expressed concern about behaviour.
- Pupils' attendance has declined since the previous inspection and it remains too low. The rates of persistent absence are significantly in excess of the national average, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- The pupil premium funding allocated to improve the attendance of eligible pupils is having limited impact. Many more disadvantaged pupils than other pupils nationally are regularly absent from school.
- Commendably, some pupils sit quietly in lessons, despite lesson content that is not well matched to pupils' needs.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Outcomes are inadequate. Pupils do not reach the standards they should and, in 2017, pupils made significantly less progress than their peers nationally in most subjects at GCSE, including English and mathematics. The progress of disadvantaged pupils and

the most able pupils was particularly poor when compared to those with the same starting points nationally.

- The progress of the most able pupils who left Year 11 in 2016 and 2017 was weak. Information presented by the school indicates that the current most-able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are significantly underperforming in Years 10 and 11. No attainment information was presented for pupils in Year 9.
- Evidence from visits to lessons and work scrutiny indicate that pupils' progress overall, and the progress of disadvantaged pupils in particular, is too variable, both across and within subject areas. Disadvantaged pupils and boys in Year 11, for example, have made less progress over time in English than others with the same starting points. This is because improvements in teaching have been too recent to close the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding caused by weak teaching in the past.
- Current assessment information from the school shows that boys are still making less progress than girls in English and science. Progress for disadvantaged pupils is still variable and these differences are still evident across the curriculum.
- Target-setting at key stage 4 is unrealistic and assessment is inconsistent. Leaders found it difficult to produce reliable information about the progress pupils had made during their time in school. Over half of parents who responded to the inspection survey felt that their children were not making good progress.
- Too many pupils have left the school in recent years with weak literacy and numeracy skills. Consequently, pupils are not prepared well enough for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making good progress from their starting points.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Too few of the students make accelerated progress to enable them to achieve at the levels of which they are capable. A significant proportion of students enter the sixth form having underachieved at key stage 4. This means that they cannot start their Year 12 courses at the appropriate level and so fail to reach the highest standards.
- The progress of disadvantaged students is less strong in the academic subjects than the progress of other students.
- Outcomes in the sixth form over time have been affected by variable teaching quality, as in the rest of the school. Teaching is more effective in vocational subjects. Progress on these courses is stronger than on academic courses and improving over time. Some teaching is now addressing previous shortfalls in students' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Leadership has improved recently. Staffing has changed and clearer expectations are in place for teaching staff about what is required in terms of planning, feedback and monitoring. The leader of the sixth form has an accurate understanding of the quality of provision. She monitors the achievement of the students and the quality of teaching carefully.
- Increasingly, leaders have monitored the quality of teaching on 16 to 19 study

programmes more rigorously. As a result, they have provided clearer guidance on strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning. In most lessons visited by inspectors, teaching was engaging and learners participated with interest.

- Students are able to study a broad range of subjects, even though the number of students in the sixth form has reduced over the last two years.
- Students who did not achieve a good pass in Year 11 are now given the opportunity to study and retake English and mathematics at GCSE. Success rates are improving.
- The 16 to 19 provision meets all aspects of the study programme.
- Opportunities for students to be involved in work experience are increasing. Leaders ensure that students develop their employability skills through a strong careers programme, using outside speakers and involving students in mentoring projects.
- Retention is good between Year 12 and Year 13. Those who do leave have found employment, changed to a course in another college or moved location.
- Students report feeling safe in the sixth form. They speak highly of all aspects of the sixth form and could explain how they are helped to keep safe and know how to form strong relationships through work done with their teachers. They value the support they receive to support their applications to university and further study or employment. Very few students leave without securing their next steps.

School details

Unique reference number	137598
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10042176

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	13 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	543
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	144
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	David Cairns
Headteacher	Alexis Widdowson
Telephone number	01289 305 083
Website	www.berwickacademy.co.uk
Email address	widdowsona@berwickacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 January 2016

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The number of pupils on roll has fallen in recent years.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities supported by the school is well above the national average.
- No pupils attend off-site provision. The Eden Centre run by the school for its own

pupils provides an alternative curriculum and courses for around 10 pupils who require extra support.

- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 35 lessons across a broad range of subjects. These included lessons observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Inspectors held discussions with four groups of pupils and with many other pupils informally around the school. Inspectors listened to a number of pupils read.
- Meetings were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders, teachers and newly qualified teachers. A meeting was also held with five members of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with the school's improvement partner.
- Inspectors took account of the 114 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 36 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at the school's website and a range of documentation provided by the school. This included information on pupils' learning and progress, attendance and behaviour, school policies, the school's self-evaluation of its work, school improvement plans and information about safeguarding.
- Inspectors looked at behaviour records and reviewed safeguarding documentation and how this related to daily practice, as well as speaking with staff and children.

Inspection team

Tudor Griffiths, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Crane	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Welford	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Tull	Ofsted Inspector

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

© Crown copyright 2018