

Haughton Academy

Salters Lane South, Darlington, County Durham DL1 2AN

Inspection dates

12–13 June 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Although there was some improvement in 2017, historically, pupils have made less progress than other pupils nationally from the same starting points. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has been particularly weak.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is variable. The progress made by pupils is inconsistent, within and between subjects.
- Teachers do not always set tasks at the right level for pupils. This is because information about pupils' starting points is not always used effectively in planning lessons, so pupils' progress is slower than it should be.
- Poor behaviour in a range of subjects and classes is preventing pupils from making better progress. This is particularly the case in lower sets.
- Although there has been recent improvement, over several years, pupils' rates of attendance and persistent absence have been worse than the national averages.
- The proportion of pupils who are excluded for a fixed period, and repeatedly excluded, is well above average and has been so for several years.
- Although leaders have put in place a programme of work to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremist views, the impact is yet to be seen, as pupils currently do not understand these risks.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' behaviour is improving. Combined with stronger teaching, this is leading to improving outcomes for pupils.
- The new curriculum at key stage 4 is aspirational for all pupils and enables them to move on to appropriately challenging next steps.
- Supported by governors and the chief executive officer of the trust, the principal is building a sustainable, strong foundation for the school. Staff morale is high.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are a strength of the school. Pupils speak warmly of the school's climate of tolerance and understanding.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that all pupils make consistently strong progress by:
 - ensuring that all teachers make effective use of pupil assessment information in planning lessons which are pitched at the right level
 - making sure that intervention strategies are effectively planned, monitored and delivered.
- Continue to improve the standard of pupils' behaviour and reduce the proportion of fixed-term exclusions by:
 - reducing the small proportion of pupils who repeatedly disrupt the learning of others
 - ensuring that all staff apply, consistently, a wider range of strategies designed to reduce instances of poor behaviour
 - ensuring that pupils' conduct and self-regulation are consistently good across all subjects and classes.
- Improve pupils' attendance at school further by taking further steps with parents, carers and pupils to make attendance at school a higher priority.
- Further embed the work already being undertaken to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremist views.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since his appointment in September 2016, the principal, ably supported by senior leaders and governors, has worked with drive and determination to improve the school. Under the principal's unswerving direction, leaders have begun to establish a culture of ambition which has started to secure improvements. However, leaders acknowledge that there is still room for further improvement.
- Leaders have rightly prioritised improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They have an increasingly detailed picture of teaching in the school because systems to check the quality of teaching are effective. This has enabled leaders to identify where teaching is weaker. As a result, plans are in place to further strengthen teaching in a range of subjects, including English, science, history, technology, music, performing arts and information technology.
- New processes for developing the professional skills of teachers have been introduced. Staff increasingly share good practice and learn from one another. They are very positive about how they are being supported to become better teachers. This focus on professional development has enabled teachers to improve their use of pupils' prior assessment information in lesson planning and, as a result, to help pupils make strong progress. However, there is inconsistency in the effectiveness of teachers' planning, such as in science, mathematics, religious education (RE), modern foreign languages and music, where progress is sometimes not as strong.
- The principal, supported by governors and the chief executive officer of the trust, has started to build a committed subject leadership team. Subject leaders now have a more clear-sighted view of the challenges facing the school, and have started to address the priorities with purpose. As a result, there is now a much greater understanding of how to use pupils' assessment information to track, evaluate and act when pupils fall behind. However, leaders acknowledge that there is still inconsistency in the leadership, performance and quality of teaching in a range of subject areas and in the extent to which recent initiatives are fully embedded.
- Leaders have taken action to improve the standard of behaviour in school. Pupils and staff are unanimous that behaviour is improving. However, over time, the proportion of pupils who are excluded for a fixed period remains too high. Although most pupils conduct themselves well most of the time, leaders have not yet sufficiently addressed the persistently poor behaviour of a small group of pupils. In addition, pupils' rates of attendance are below average. Leaders accept that there is work still to be done here.
- In most respects, leaders are effective in preparing pupils for life in modern Britain. Under the principal's stewardship, leaders have implemented a coherent scheme of work to teach pupils about different faiths, cultures and diversity. Plans for the use of additional funding are clear and fit for purpose. The pupil premium plan, for instance, identifies barriers to pupils' achievement and sets out a series of evidence-based strategies to overcome them. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' progress in 2017 showed a slight improvement compared with previous years. A new leader for SEN and/or disabilities has been recently appointed and has started a review of how SEN and/or disabilities funding is used. It is too early to assess the impact of this review.

- Leaders have taken swift action to implement a new curriculum at key stage 4 to widen opportunity and raise expectations. Pupils are enthusiastic about this and about the extra-curricular opportunities available to them.
- The school is in receipt of support from a variety of quarters. This includes school improvement officers from a neighbouring local authority and support from two nearby schools. This has assisted leaders in their work to improve systems to track pupils' progress more accurately than has been the case, to support middle leaders in improving the quality of their work and to develop leaders' skills in evaluating the impact of their actions.

Governance of the school

- Governors share and support the principal's vision for the school. They are equally committed to further improvement. The trust has reconstituted the governing body so that it now contains people with appropriate skills to hold leaders to account. Inspection evidence demonstrates that governors challenge leaders about the school's performance.
- Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They make sure that they know their school, for example by visiting specific departments or leaders and conducting activities such as observing lessons. These visits are planned and conclusions or actions recorded.
- Considering the school's underperformance over several years, governors appreciate the need for improvement to happen quickly and they challenge leaders in bringing this about. However, this process needs to be speeded up.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that robust and appropriate policies for keeping pupils safe are in place. There are clear lines of communication with relevant professionals in child protection services. Those responsible for safeguarding have received the necessary training and hold the required qualification. All staff are well versed in looking out for signs of abuse or potential radicalisation. They are clear about what to do should they be concerned. While there is a comprehensive plan in place to teach pupils about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, the impact of this is yet to be seen in pupils' understanding.
- Checks on the suitability of adults to work with children and protocols for the safe recruitment of staff are fit for purpose and meet requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- There is some very effective teaching across the school which helps many pupils to make good progress but this is not yet consistent. There is variability within and between subjects. While teachers often make effective use of pupils' assessment information to set tasks at the right level, this is not yet consistently the case.

Consequently, work is not always sufficiently challenging or is too demanding for pupils from their starting points. Inspectors saw this inconsistency in science, mathematics, RE, modern foreign languages and music.

- Pupils said that the variability in the appropriateness of challenge was spread across a range of subjects. They also said that poor behaviour in some lessons happens because the pupils cannot access the work or because it does not stretch them enough.
- Many pupils are enthusiastic learners who are keen to make progress and do well. Many pupils are highly motivated, for instance in English, Spanish, RE and art. Others, because of unchallenging work, are more passive in their learning. At times, such as in modern foreign languages and – indicative of the variability within subjects – RE, teachers set work which keeps pupils compliant in their behaviour rather than to stretch pupils' learning.
- The quality of teachers' explanations, intended to ensure that pupils understand what to do and what they are learning, is variable at times. Pupils in science, for example, are not clear on the purpose of the learning. There is a similar lack of clarity sometimes in mathematics and music. In contrast, at other times in science, mathematics and music, pupils were able to articulate what they were learning and why. In English, they make good progress, in part because they can link the learning to the examination assessment objectives.
- Often, for example in English, mathematics, art, geography and history, teachers' use of questioning is skilled and sufficiently stretches pupils' learning. This too is variable, however, and is less effective in securing pupils' progress at other times, such as science and mathematics.
- Plans and actions designed to improve pupils' progress are not always effective in their impact or valued by students. A mathematics intervention programme for which pupils receive an additional number of hours every week is characterised by poor behaviour, slapdash work and a poor attitude to learning. Pupils do not believe that they are being 'taught' during these lessons and, as a result, find them of little value. None of the pupils could explain what they were learning. While well intentioned, leaders do not have a close enough eye on the impact of this strategy.
- Many pupils benefit from teaching which is of a high standard. Where teaching is strong, teachers' enthusiasm, detailed subject specialist knowledge and effective planning ensure that pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are convincingly developed. Pupils make good progress as a result, for example in physical education, information technology and business studies.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Most pupils feel safe at school. A minority of pupils, however, feel less safe at times because of the conduct of some pupils in corridors and around the school. Leaders have made provision for the most vulnerable pupils through a safe nurture base for use at social times. All pupils know that they can talk to staff should something worry them

and who that person would be should it be necessary. Pupils' well-being is further supported by the availability of counselling and work on healthy lifestyles.

- Pupils report that bullying is rare at school but, when it occurs, staff are effective at resolving it. Leaders are not complacent about bullying. For example, they have recently introduced a team of pupil anti-bullying ambassadors to be visible and accessible sources of support for their peers.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe online through a curriculum which addresses the dangers of sexting, sexual exploitation, 'selfies' and drugs.
- There is an integrated, structured curriculum to further develop pupils' readiness for life in modern Britain. Pupils speak confidently about what they have learned about different faiths, cultures and beliefs and how the on-site special school has increased their understanding of disabilities. Pupils also speak positively about how the school is a tolerant, diverse and accepting community. As one pupil said, 'School enables individuality, helping us to become a better person.'
- Leaders ensure that they have strong communication with the alternative educational provision used by the school. Pupils' attendance, progress and personal development are monitored and, where necessary, further support is put in place.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- There is no doubt that leaders have improved behaviour in the school. Pupils and staff confirm that this is the case. However, there is still much to be done.
- Over several years, pupils' rates of absence have been higher than the national average. Although leaders have acted to improve this picture, absence remains stubbornly higher than the national average. Although improving recently, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has also been higher than the national average for several years.
- Rates of fixed-term exclusion are well above the national average and have been consistently so for several years. The proportion of pupils who are excluded more than once is also well above the national average. While leaders are determined to adopt a 'zero-tolerance' approach to breaches of the school's behaviour policy and to use exclusion as a strategy to achieve this aim, it is not effective with the most challenging pupils.
- Leaders are aware of the 'hard core' of poorly behaved pupils. Almost all of the pupils spoken to by inspectors said that there is repeated poor behaviour by this same group of pupils, both in lessons and in corridors. Pupils say that their learning is typically disrupted in one lesson every day, especially in lower sets, where it can be 'rowdy'. Some older pupils recognise that a lot has been done to improve behaviour but that leaders have not yet been successful in tackling the most challenging behaviour. Although leaders have tried different approaches, such as an online education package used by a large number of pupils at risk of exclusion, the behaviour of this small group continues to significantly affect the progress of the well-behaved majority.
- Behaviour in the majority of lessons seen by inspectors is good, characterised by strong relationships between staff and pupils. Inspectors were made to feel welcome

by pupils and saw a calm and orderly environment with, for most of the time, a strong climate for learning.

- On occasions, however, conduct is not as good and there is disruption to learning. Pupils say that behaviour often deteriorates when the lesson is being covered by a supply teacher. Leaders need to do more to develop pupils' self-discipline so that staff who are unfamiliar to them do not have to manage poor standards of behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Typically, pupils enter the school in Year 7 with average or below-average levels of attainment. Over the last four years, Year 11 pupils made progress that was well below that of other pupils nationally from the same starting points. The progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has been particularly weak for several years. For the last two years, pupils with high prior attainment on entry to the school have also made slower progress by the end of Year 11 than pupils with the same starting points nationally.
- Standards improved slightly for the pupils who left the school in 2017, although progress remained below the national average across a number of subjects, including English, science, modern foreign languages and humanities. Leaders accept that there is more work to be done to further improve pupils' outcomes and that they are not yet good enough.
- Lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work show that many pupils are now making better progress across several subjects and years. However, the gains made by pupils are still variable within and between subjects. There is inconsistent progress in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, RE and music. This occurs when teachers' expectations are too low, where the purpose of the learning is not as clear as it should be and when planning does not enable pupils to fully get to grips with the task.
- Pupils believe that they do not always make the progress of which they are capable across a range of subjects. They told inspectors that this is because work is not always well matched to their abilities.
- An effectively implemented plan for the use of additional funding has led to disadvantaged pupils across different years and subjects beginning to make stronger progress as the result of a focus on teaching to meet their needs. Funding for the improvement of literacy in Year 7 is enabling pupils to make gains in their reading, for example through catch-up schemes.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are also making better progress but there are still differences between them and their peers and there is more work to be done. There is less clarity about the impact of additional funding on the various intervention strategies used by the school. However, the recently appointed leader for SEN and/or disabilities is conducting a review into the impact of these interventions.
- Leaders have successfully taken action to improve the quality of impartial careers education, advice and guidance. There is now in place a range of opportunities for career-related visits, speakers, business links and university outreach. As a result of leaders' actions, the proportion of pupils who progress from the end of Year 11 to an

appropriate education or training course has improved markedly and is now above the national average.

School details

Unique reference number	138089
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10048281

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	772
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Helen Radcliffe
Chief executive officer (statutory headteacher)	Mike Butler
Principal in charge	Jonathan Lumb
Telephone number	01325 254 000
Website	www.educationvillage.org.uk/
Email address	hcsdata@educationvillage.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 May 2016

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Education Village Academy Trust and converted to become an academy in April 2012. The trust's leadership structure consists of the members, directors and local governance through 'education standards committees' for each of the five schools in the trust. There is a chief executive officer, who is also the statutory headteacher of the school. An executive leadership team consists of the chief executive officer, director of finance and operations, an executive officer and the principals of the five schools in the trust.
- Two other schools belonging to the trust are housed in the same buildings as Houghton Academy: Beaumont Hill Academy (special) and Springfield Academy (primary).

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan for their SEN and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion of pupils who have support for their SEN and/or disabilities is higher than the national average.
- A higher proportion of pupils than found nationally are eligible for free school meals.
- The school works with several alternative providers of education: Right Tracks; Box Clever; Clifton House; the Coleridge Centre; Rise Carr (incorporating the Home and Hospital Unit); and EdLounge.
- The school receives formal support through a brokered arrangement with Durham local authority.
- The school meets the current government floor standards.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons across a range of year groups and subjects, sometimes accompanied by school leaders. Inspectors scrutinised pupils’ work, both in lessons and as part of a work sample.
- Meetings were held with the chief executive officer, the principal, other school leaders, teachers at different career points, non-teachers and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in formal meetings and informally in lessons and around the school.
- The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with the school improvement partner.
- An inspector had telephone conversations with three of the alternative providers used by the school.
- A range of school documentation was scrutinised, including: school improvement plans; school self-evaluation; behaviour and attendance records; minutes of meetings with governors; pupils’ progress information; and documents relating to child protection and safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the 16 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, including seven free-text responses. The views of one parent who spoke with an inspector were also considered.

Inspection team

Steve Shaw, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
John Downs	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah MacDermott	Ofsted Inspector
Joanne Owens	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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