

# Thomas Hepburn Community Academy

Swards Road, Felling, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear NE10 9UZ

## Inspection dates

5–6 December 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	Inadequate

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- This school is no longer inadequate. Despite managing difficult circumstances as the school moves towards closure, leaders have improved the quality of education that pupils receive.
- From very low starting points, the quality of teaching has improved significantly. However, across the school there continues to be some variability in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in key stage 3.
- Some teachers do not consistently take sufficient account of pupils' starting points and additional needs when planning lessons. Some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make slower progress as a result.
- A very small minority of pupils continue to display challenging behaviour. While the number of temporary exclusions has halved since the previous inspection, further reducing exclusions remains a priority for the school.
- Current pupils are making stronger progress than in the past, particularly in key stage 4. Nevertheless, the legacy of weaker teaching over time means that some pupils have gaps in their knowledge and understanding which hinder their achievement.
- Opportunities for pupils to read or develop their literacy skills are variable across the school. In some classes, pupils make basic errors in their written work that are not addressed by teachers.
- Rates of attendance have fluctuated. Because the school is closing, some pupils are choosing not to attend during their transfer phase to a new school.
- The careers and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum requires further development.

### The school has the following strengths

- The executive and acting principal are resolute in their determination to do their best for every pupil in the school. Morale is high because staff feel well supported and pupils recognise the improvements to their school.
- Members of the governing body challenge leaders effectively. The chair of the governing body provides strong leadership.
- The multi-academy trust (the trust) provides a wide range of effective support. Subject leaders from the trust work with staff, pupils and leaders on a daily basis. This has helped to improve the quality of teaching.
- Pupils' attitudes to their learning have improved. Staff and pupils say that the standards of behaviour are much stronger.

## Full report

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
  - working closely with pupils and families to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence
  - eradicating the inappropriate behaviour that leads to a minority of pupils being excluded so that the proportion of fixed-term exclusions reduces further
  - refining the careers education curriculum so that all pupils receive independent, high-quality advice and guidance
  - refining the PSHE curriculum so that pupils receive the same opportunities to reflect upon and develop their personal skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, so that all pupils, particularly pupils with SEND, make at least good progress by:
  - ensuring that teachers use information about pupils' starting points and any additional needs to plan appropriately challenging work
  - providing more consistent opportunities for pupils to develop their reading skills
  - developing a consistent approach to addressing weaknesses in pupils' basic literacy skills.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by reviewing the provision for pupils with SEND to ensure that pupils receive the support they need.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The quality of education that pupils receive is much stronger than at the time of the last inspection. Despite managing difficult circumstances following the decision to close the school, leaders and governors have secured improvements which ensure that pupils are now receiving an adequate standard of education. Teaching continues to improve and current pupils are now making better progress, attaining higher standards than they did previously. Even so, leaders have not entirely eradicated the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. This remains variable, particularly in key stage 3.
- The executive principal and acting principal provide passionate leadership. Together, they are steadfast in their determination to do their very best for the remaining pupils in the school.
- Experienced subject leaders from the trust work alongside school staff. Many of the trust leaders teach or share a class with another teacher. Often, trust leaders will act as a 'critical friend', monitor the quality of teaching or contribute to the assessment processes in school. Collectively, school and trust staff complement the work of each other, providing bespoke support and intervention that is contributing to improving outcomes in a number of subjects, particularly in English and mathematics.
- As the school nears closure and some staff have moved on to posts in other schools, leaders of the trust have provided effective additional support to improve the quality of education through subject leadership. However, leadership of provision for pupils with SEND has been less effectively managed. Some of the 'pupil profile' information sheets provided to teachers are too generic. Consequently, there is variability in the extent to which some teachers plan to meet the specific needs of pupils with SEND.
- The arrangements to formally assess pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are strong. Leaders ensure that teachers use well-established assessments, supported by the trust. They regularly check teachers' feedback to pupils, ensuring that assessment information is accurate.
- Leaders have introduced strategies designed to urgently improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. For example, Year 11 pupils benefit from additional, focused English and mathematics lessons at the end of the school day. Attendance at these sessions is high. The progress of the disadvantaged pupils who attend these classes regularly has improved recently.
- Staff morale is high. Leaders have successfully managed to adjust staffing levels, in line with the reduction in pupil numbers, and maintain a motivated team that is determined to 'see the job through'. Every member of staff who responded to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire said that the school is well led and managed.
- The curriculum is meeting the needs of pupils currently in the school. Usually, Year 9 pupils study a reduced number of subjects following their 'options' in Year 8. However, leaders made the decision to delay current Year 9 pupils' options, so that they could continue to study a wider range of subjects. This ensures that pupils who join a new school, with a two-year key stage 4, are not disadvantaged by having dropped some

subjects a year earlier.

## Governance of the school

- The chair of the governing body shares the passion of the executive principal and acting principal. He describes the previous inspection as a turning point in the work of the governing body, saying that 'there could be no more excuses'.
- Governors have a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They do not accept information from leaders readily. Minutes from the meetings of the governing body demonstrate that governors ask challenging questions of staff. Governors often request additional information or insist that leaders attend meetings to update them on matters affecting pupils' progress or welfare.
- Governors have specific responsibilities. They monitor and evaluate important parts of the school's work, such as safeguarding, disadvantaged pupils' progress or 'stakeholder opinions'. The chair of the governing body noted that it is vital that governors meet with leaders and visit the school to ensure that they 'feel it through their toes', while carrying out checks on the impact of leaders' actions.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders make appropriate checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils. Staff receive regular training to ensure that they understand how to keep pupils safe. Records relating to child protection are well kept. This has improved recently following a period of intense scrutiny from governors.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and that they know they can speak to any adult in the school if something is worrying them.
- Leaders conduct regular checks on the attendance of the small number of pupils who attend alternative education provision to ensure that they are safe.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Over time, teaching has not been strong enough to ensure that pupils make at least good progress in a wide range of subjects. Although improving, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment remains inconsistent across the school.
- Some teachers do not promote the importance of literacy development. Often, pupils' weak literacy skills go unchallenged. For example, scrutiny of Year 8 pupils' written work demonstrates that pupils often spell simple words incorrectly, such as the months of the year or age-appropriate subject vocabulary. Because teachers do not routinely challenge pupils to spell accurately or learn spelling rules, similar literacy errors remain.
- Support for pupils who need help to catch up with their reading skills requires further development. Some pupils are disappointed that the school library has closed and say that they would welcome the opportunity to read more often in their social time and in lessons.
- Teachers' use of assessment information to inform their planning is variable. Where teaching is strongest, for example in English at key stage 4, work is well matched to

pupils' needs and incisive feedback to pupils helps them to make strong progress. However, in some classes, particularly at key stage 3, teachers do not build so successfully on pupils' starting points. This inhibits the progress some pupils make. For example, in one mathematics lesson, questions relating to sharing amounts into a ratio were far too challenging for pupils other than the most able. Some pupils were unable to progress beyond the first question without the support of their peers or the teacher.

- The most able pupils in mathematics are supported effectively. Teachers ask these pupils to complete activities that are more closely matched to their starting points. In addition, teachers, and additional classroom support staff, often sit beside the most able to pose a more challenging question or ask pupils to articulate their understanding further.
- Some key stage 4 pupils receive bespoke English and mathematics support during and after school. Pupils say that the additional sessions help them to gain a better understanding of concepts that they may not have studied for some time.
- The stronger teaching in some subjects is supported well by leaders' careful analysis of curriculum plans. Teachers and leaders have worked together to ensure that the topics and case studies that pupils investigate are current, relevant and capture their imagination. Teachers often bring a subject to life via an interesting anecdote or discussion.
- Most teachers' subject knowledge is strong. This ensures that pupils are comfortable to ask enquiring questions. Currently, some teachers are required to teach subjects that are not their specialism. However, leaders provide teachers with good-quality lesson plans and resources to support them and their pupils. This, and effective advice and training from trust leaders, ensures that most teachers are broadening their own skills in the classroom, particularly in humanities.
- Teachers deploy additional classroom support staff effectively. Additional staff are knowledgeable and well respected by the pupils. Teachers ensure that they liaise with staff in advance of each lesson so that, together, they know what their colleague will be doing during the course of the lesson. In this way, pupils receive appropriate support in lessons when it is available.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Opportunities for pupils to receive independent, high-quality careers advice require further development. Some Year 11 pupils do not have a clear understanding about their next steps.
- Some teachers encourage pupils to discuss and debate current affairs or politics during personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons. However, the rationale and design of the PSHE curriculum is less clear than for other areas of the curriculum. Consequently, not all pupils benefit from such focused activities during PSHE lessons.

- Relationships between staff and pupils are usually very positive. Pupils willingly accept and seek the support of an adult in the classroom. Conversations between staff and pupils around the school are pleasant and often include references to pupils' learning.
- Leaders appreciate the importance of nurturing pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. Despite a reduction in services locally, leaders ensure that pupils in need of support are linked with a professional for counselling or know who to speak to if they have a concern.
- The social skills of the pupils attending alternative education provision are nurtured well. This is because pupils work collaboratively. Furthermore, pupils are encouraged to consider and develop inter-personal skills that relate to their chosen vocation.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Rates of attendance have fluctuated. Prior to the consultation period to close the school, rates of attendance were increasing and the proportion of pupils who were persistently absent was decreasing. However, more recently, attendance figures have been affected significantly by the impending closure of the school. For example, some pupils remain absent while they are awaiting a start date for their new school. Leaders follow these absences up with appropriate tenacity.
- Staff and pupils say that behaviour is much improved since the previous inspection. Rates of temporary exclusion in 2016 were extremely high. Since then, due to leaders' actions, they have halved. In addition, the proportion of pupils who are excluded permanently has substantially reduced during the same period. Currently, a small minority of pupils continue to display attitudes to learning that fall below the high standards expected from leaders. This small group accounts for the vast majority of temporary exclusions this academic year. Nevertheless, rates of temporary exclusion remain well above average and addressing this remains a priority for the school.
- The well-established behaviour policy has transformed the working environment in the classroom. Staff and pupils say that before it was introduced, pupils' behaviour was very poor and low-level disruption was common. Now, in most cases, pupils can concentrate on their work without interruption. Pupils are clear about the consequences of misbehaviour and report that teachers apply the school's policy fairly, giving them chances to modify and improve their conduct.
- The vast majority of pupils are polite and engage in purposeful discussion with visitors. They wear their uniform with pride and arrive at their lessons on time.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- As a result of a historical legacy of weaker teaching, some pupils in Year 11 have not made the progress they should from their starting points. However, since the previous inspection, progress has accelerated in key stage 4 as a result of better quality teaching. Consequently, pupils' attainment is rising. Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 4 was much improved in 2018. The proportion of pupils achieving a strong pass in both GCSE English and mathematics was above average.
- Many pupils currently in the school are achieving well in some subjects. Stronger

teaching is now contributing to pupils making more progress from their different starting points. Work scrutiny demonstrates that pupils' attitudes to their learning are improving. In English and humanities, pupils' books are well presented. When key stage 3 pupils are asked to write at length, many approach the task with gusto. However, this stronger progress is not consistent for all pupils, particularly at key stage 3.

- Pupils with SEND continue to make variable progress across the school. When teachers carefully consider the starting points of these pupils, in addition to their often-complex needs, progress is accelerated. However, not all teachers do this consistently well. Consequently, some pupils with SEND do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Scrutiny of pupils' written work highlights that some pupils have gaps in their basic literacy skills. Teachers are not consistent enough in improving this important aspect of pupils' learning.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is improving. This is because strategies to support disadvantaged pupils are focused more on their academic outcomes this year. Leaders, including governors, review plans regularly and redirect resources swiftly due to the ever-changing pupil numbers.
- The very small number of Year 11 pupils who attend alternative education provision develop appropriate work-related skills. This ensures that pupils are prepared for more demanding post-16 courses or have the confidence to apply for relevant jobs.
- Although still below average, information provided by the school indicates that the proportion of pupils who go on to further education, employment or training is improving.

## School details

Unique reference number	140035
Local authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	10048305

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

Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	173
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Colin Ferguson
Principal	Hijab Zaheer (Acting Principal) Jo Nolan (Executive Principal)
Telephone number	0191 4204555
Website	<a href="http://www.thomashepburnacademy.org">www.thomashepburnacademy.org</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:thomashepburn.enquiries@northerneducationtrust.org">thomashepburn.enquiries@northerneducationtrust.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	29–30 November 2016

## Information about this school

- The school is due to close on 31 August 2019. Currently, only Year 8, 9 and 11 pupils are on site.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The vast majority of pupils attending the school are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and receive support from the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average.
- The school is a member of the Northern Education Trust (NET) multi-academy trust. Responsibility for the school rests with the local governing board. It is their responsibility to ensure that the school is run effectively, hold the school to account, manage the performance of the principal and develop their own partnerships and



collaborations'; Northern Education Trust website:  
[www.northerneducationtrust.org/governance/the-trust-governance-structure](http://www.northerneducationtrust.org/governance/the-trust-governance-structure)

- An executive principal works in the school on a part-time basis. Her main focus this academic year is to lead on the arrangements to close the school.
- Currently, the school uses part-time and full-time alternative education provision at New Leaf ASP Limited and NACRO (Newcastle).

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a wide range of lessons across the school. All teachers were observed teaching. Many of the observations in lessons were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings and discussions were held with senior and subject leaders, teachers, trust leaders, the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the trust.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work during lessons and with a group of subject leaders in English, mathematics and humanities. In addition, an inspector scrutinised the work of pupils with SEND with the temporary special educational needs coordinator.
- An inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative from one alternative education provider used by the school.
- Inspectors held informal and formal discussions with many pupils and observed interactions during social times.
- Inspectors listened to a group of Year 8 pupils read.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and scrutinised a wide range of evidence, including action plans and evaluations, analysis of performance information, attendance and behaviour records, safeguarding files, recruitment checks and governor minutes.
- There were no returns of Parent View, Ofsted's online parent questionnaire. Seventeen members of staff and 47 pupils completed Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys. All of these responses were taken into consideration.

## Inspection team

Lee Elliott, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Dan Murray	Ofsted Inspector
Gabrielle Reddington	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](http://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](mailto: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](http://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](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://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](mailto: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/](http://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](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2018