

Kepier

Dairy Lane, Houghton le Spring, Tyne and Wear DH4 5BH

Inspection dates

23–24 January 2019

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent across and within different subject areas across the school. Leaders have not acted swiftly enough to make improvements and prevent the decline in pupils' progress.
- Pupils' outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), since the previous inspection have not been good enough.
- Expectations of what all pupils should achieve are not high enough. As a result, pupils' progress requires improvement.
- Over time, governors have not held leaders sufficiently to account for the impact of pupil premium funding on disadvantaged pupils' outcomes. As a result, the progress of these pupils is weak.
- Middle leaders are becoming increasingly accountable for the progress pupils make in their subject areas. However, there is still some variability in the quality of middle leadership.
- Pupils say that behaviour is improving, especially now that they have moved into the new building. However, the number of behaviour incidents and removals from lessons remains too high.
- The percentage of pupils who are persistently absent from school, particularly those who are disadvantaged, is above the national average and has been for the last three years.
- Most pupils attending alternative education make better progress than when they were in school. However, procedures and policies for monitoring alternative provision are not tight enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders are accurate in their analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have appropriate plans and capacity to improve the school.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and have a trusted member of staff they can approach if they experience difficulties.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders are passionate about ensuring that pupils access a curriculum that will enable them to succeed in education, employment or training.
- Safeguarding records show that any concerns are logged and appropriate and timely action is taken to keep pupils safe.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - increasing governors' challenge to leaders so that there is greater accountability for the spending of pupil premium funding and the effect that this has on disadvantaged pupils' progress and attendance
 - continuing to work with middle leaders to strengthen their monitoring and accountability for pupils' progress
 - strengthening procedures and protocols for pupils attending alternative education provision and behaviour support in other schools.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that teachers challenge all pupils, but particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, to make better progress.
- Improve pupils' behaviour and attendance by:
 - reducing the instances of low-level disruption in lessons
 - continuing to develop strategies and work with pupils to reduce persistent absence.
- Improve pupils' progress by ensuring that pupils' and staff's expectations of what can be achieved are high for all pupils.

An external review of the school's use of 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

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have not been effective in preventing the decline in pupils' progress that has taken place since the previous inspection. Consequently, the amount of progress pupils made, overall, has decreased and now requires improvement.
- Leaders do not have sufficiently high aspirations for all pupils. Some targets, set by leaders, for pupils' attainment are not challenging enough and do not lead pupils to make the progress they are capable of.
- When pupils are absent from school, they do not always catch up on the work they miss. Pupils say that in some lessons, such as mathematics, they are expected to catch up in their own time. However, this is not consistent across all subjects and leads to gaps in pupils' knowledge.
- The quality of middle leadership is variable across the school. Leaders are taking action to improve this, and middle leaders are beginning to hold their staff to account for the progress pupils make.
- Following the decline in pupils' overall progress since the previous inspection, leaders have acted to evaluate carefully the reasons for this. With their 'back to basics' approach, they are now ensuring that there is a focus on improving and monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. It is too soon to see the full impact of the actions taken so far.
- The school has a service level agreement with Durham local authority and regular reviews are undertaken about the quality of education. Some of this work has been effective in supporting leaders to implement improvements.
- There is a very caring culture in the school. Staff care deeply about pupils and their well-being and are dedicated to their roles.
- The principal and her leadership team are passionate about the life chances of all pupils. They are very clear that they want all pupils to be able to access a high-quality and, where appropriate, academic curriculum that will give them every opportunity to succeed in further and higher education and employment.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain. An effective and comprehensive programme for culture and well-being ensures that pupils are educated about other religions and cultures and learn respect and tolerance. Pupils learn about the risks they may face and how to keep themselves safe.
- Leaders in the football academy are clear that pupils' progress across all aspects of their education are equally valuable.

Governance of the school

- Over the last two academic years, in some areas, governors have not effectively supported or challenged leaders to prevent the decline in some pupils' progress. For example, governors have not held leaders to account well enough to ensure that the

additional funding available for disadvantaged pupils has been spent well. As a result, it has had little impact on improving progress for disadvantaged pupils.

- More recently, governors have carried out a review of the school, which has helped leaders develop more precise actions to improve. For example, the review identified that leaders' views of the quality of teaching and learning are over optimistic and low-level disruption occurs too often.
- Governors have the skills and knowledge to effectively support and challenge school leaders and, following the review, are in a stronger position to do so.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The designated safeguarding lead ensures that all safeguarding concerns raised by staff are quickly actioned. Precise and diligent records show that issues are dealt with swiftly and appropriately followed up.
- Pupils who are vulnerable are massively appreciative of the work that the designated safeguarding lead and his team do to support them and keep them safe. One pupil said, 'I know he looks out for me and wants the best for me.'
- Staff undertake regular safeguarding training and have a strong awareness of the signs to look out for should a pupil be vulnerable. The safeguarding and protection culture in school is strong.
- Most pupils agree strongly that they feel safe in school. They say that issues do happen but, when they make teachers aware of them, they will receive appropriate support.
- Pupils in alternative provision are safe. However, leaders acknowledge that the procedures and protocols for placing pupils in alternative education provision are less clear and could be strengthened.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Where teaching is stronger, for example in science, computing, technology and music, pupils make better progress because teachers plan learning that challenges and meets the needs of pupils. Where teaching is weaker, teachers do not plan lessons which challenge pupils to make the progress they are capable of.
- Some teachers effectively model and explain to pupils. Often teachers involve pupils in the process and ask questions that make pupils think hard and offer solutions. However, this is variable across different subject areas and some teachers are too quick to accept superficial answers. Opportunities are missed to encourage pupils to think more deeply.
- In some lessons, pupils have positive attitudes to learning because teachers have high expectations of their behaviour, for example in science. This is inconsistent across other subjects.
- In some lessons, teachers work harder than pupils do. Consequently, some pupils are over-reliant on support from the teacher. Over time, this has contributed to pupils

making progress which requires improvement.

- Teachers encourage pupils to complete extended pieces of writing, and they support pupils well with literacy development overall. There are, however, some missed opportunities for teachers to support pupils to extend their vocabulary.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge. In lessons such as science, this is used to plan lessons that are interesting and appropriately challenging and interesting for pupils.
- In physical education lessons, pupils work together and practise and develop their skills because teachers promote team work well. Pupils enjoy putting their knowledge to use in a game or competitive situation.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have access to a comprehensive programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. This is taught regularly and prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain and to face challenges as they grow into young adults.
- A comprehensive programme of careers advice and guidance is in place. Pupils regularly have the opportunity to consider their futures and are effectively supported with college and employment applications.
- Emotional support for vulnerable pupils and pupils facing difficulties is very strong. The school works well with external agencies to ensure that pupils receive the support they need.
- A small number of pupils have a mixed view of the frequency of bullying that takes place at school. Some feel it occurs more frequently than others. However, all pupils are clear that staff would resolve it promptly when they are made aware.
- Pupils are very proud of the new school building. Most pupils are happy to talk to visitors and are polite and welcoming.
- Pupils in alternative provision follow programmes that meet their needs, and most develop better social skills.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- While pupils and staff acknowledge that behaviour is improving, too many low-level disruptions, teacher sanctions and removals from lessons occur. Not all pupils have consistently positive attitudes to learning, and this shows in low level disruption and in some pupils' quality of work and presentation in their books.
- The rates of persistent absence remain above the national average and, over time, have not reduced. Leaders are aware of this and are trying a number of different strategies, including new rewards for high attendance. It is too soon to see the impact

of these strategies.

- Overall, attendance is improving. However, within this, there is further work to do to improve disadvantaged pupils' attendance to that of their peers and to that of other pupils nationally.
- Over time, there has been a reduction in the number of pupils receiving a fixed-term exclusion or a repeat exclusion. This is because leaders' strategies, such as the 'cool down provision', are beginning to have an impact on improving pupils' attitudes to school.
- Pupils in alternative education provision improve their attendance and behaviour compared to when they were in school because they receive additional support to do so.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Historical outcomes show that pupils have not made enough progress, particularly in English, languages and humanities. In mathematics, pupils' progress declined between 2017 and 2018. This is especially so for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with SEND.
- Current pupils' progress, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, is improving, but it remains variable across the curriculum. In some subjects, pupils are making better progress than pupils did in previous years, for example in English and mathematics because leaders are acting to improve the quality of teaching.
- Progress in science has been more stable over time. Pupils make better progress because they are appropriately challenged and interested in their learning.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are encouraged to read by teachers. Pupils who are part of the football academy are involved in a reading league table, which encourages them to read more and further develop their skills.
- In some subjects, such as science, computing, technology and music, pupils make good progress because they are clear about teachers' expectations.
- Almost all pupils progress from the school into education, employment or training because the school effectively supports them to do so. This is a strength of the school.

School details

Unique reference number	137262
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10091361

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1008
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr Ken Tonge
Principal	Mrs Nicola Cooper
Telephone number	0191 512 8960
Website	www.kepier.com
Email address	info@kepier.com
Date of previous inspection	13–14 January 2016

Information about this school

- Kepier is the sole academy in the Learning Matters Trust. The trust has a trust board with three members. There are six trustees and 11 governors on the local governing body. Governance meetings take place collectively with the trust and the local governing body.
- Pupils at the school have the chance to be part of the football academy. Pupils applying to the school can take part in trials when they are in Year 6. Pupils currently at the school can move into the football academy if they demonstrate the ability to do so, where they will undertake a higher proportion of football lessons.
- The school moved into a brand new, purpose-built building in January 2019.
- There is a higher than national average proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding.
- The school uses two alternative providers of education. These are New Leaf and The

Link School. The school also has an arrangement with three local secondary schools for behaviour support known as 'cool down'.

Information about this inspection

- During this inspection, inspectors observed pupils' learning and reviewed pupils' work, sometimes jointly with school leaders. Inspectors met with school leaders, governors, the chair of the trust, pupils and staff. Inspectors all spoke with some parents of pupils in the football academy.
- Inspectors observed pupils at breaktime and lunchtime and when moving around the school building.
- Inspectors reviewed records relating safeguarding, behaviour and bullying and documents and policies associated with the school.
- The inspection was carried out following a complaint made to Ofsted which raised serious concerns. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection of the school should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised. Inspectors sought to establish whether safeguarding was effective and whether leaders and managers were maintaining the quality of education at the school.

Inspection team

Debbie Redshaw, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Darren Stewart	Her Majesty's Inspector
Toni Spoors	Ofsted Inspector
Angela White	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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