

Elemore Hall School

Pittington, Durham DH6 1QD

Inspection dates

25–26 April 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders have effectively improved the quality of education since the previous inspection. High expectations of what pupils can achieve and behaviour are shared and supported by all staff. The quality of teaching has improved and is now good. This has resulted in pupils' good academic progress and personal development.
- Governance has improved. Governors now provide strong support and effective challenge to leaders.
- Pupils' social and emotional well-being are at the heart of the school's work. Staff nurture, praise and encourage pupils. Strong relationships support pupils to feel safe and grow in confidence. Pupils are respectful towards staff and their peers and show pride in their achievements.
- Behaviour is good and, in some cases, improves significantly as pupils move through the year groups. Pupils conduct themselves well around school. In classrooms, teachers create calm learning environments. Where difficulties arise, staff are adept at calming the situation quickly.
- Pupils' attendance often improves when they join the school. Although leaders have successfully improved attendance, it remains stubbornly below average. Persistent absence is also still too high and this impacts negatively on the achievement of some pupils.
- Pupils' progress in English is particularly good. Teaching ensures that pupils clearly know what they need to do to improve. Although pupils are given good opportunities to write in a range of subjects, the standard of spelling, punctuation and grammar evident in pupils' written work in some subjects does not always reflect what they are capable of.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and contributes well to pupils' academic progress and personal development. Opportunities for pupils to explore, to reason and to investigate in science and across the wider curriculum are well developed and are greatly enjoyed by pupils. However, in mathematics, opportunities for pupils to use and apply their reasoning and problem-solving skills are sometimes overlooked.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education. At the end of Year 11, all pupils move on to a college place or an apprenticeship suitable to their aspirations.
- Leaders collect a lot of information about the achievement, behaviour and attendance of each pupil. They use this information well to ensure that provision and support are appropriately tailored to individual needs. However, they do not use it effectively to identify any trends or variances in pupils' performance, such as for different groups.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and, therefore, pupils' outcomes even further by:
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to use and apply reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics
 - making sure that pupils consistently use and apply their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills in their written work in all subjects.
- Leaders' analysis of the information collected about pupils' academic progress, behaviour and attendance is improved so that any trends and variances in performance, including those of different pupil groups, are identified swiftly.
- Refine and strengthen the communication between the school and the alternative education provider so that leaders have an ongoing picture of pupils' progress and behaviour.
- Improve pupils' attendance and reduce the proportion of pupils that are persistently absent.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders are compassionate. The care for the pupils and the ethos of positivity are shared by the whole staff team. These, coupled with the high expectations for pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning, help pupils feel secure enough to learn.
- Leaders ensure that the school actively promotes equality and respect. As a result, pupils become considerate, polite and tolerant individuals.
- At the time of the previous inspection, the school's website was not compliant. Leaders have worked hard to create an informative, fully compliant website that gives an accurate and positive first impression of the school.
- Leaders and staff have developed a wide curriculum, tailored to the needs and interests of the pupils. Leaders have increased the range of qualifications on offer by adding subjects, including English literature and environmental science. The wider curriculum and after-school and evening clubs include a range of subjects to support pupils' mental health and physical well-being. Pupils particularly benefit from time spent outside studying horticulture and bushcraft and working in the forest.
- At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to review the way they spend the pupil premium funding. Just over 80% of pupils are eligible for this funding. Leaders are now using this money effectively to reduce the barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils, particularly in English and mathematics. Additional funds are being used to provide one-to-one tuition to support pupils to narrow the gap in achievement between them and their peers.
- Staff are extremely positive about the school, the leaders and their own professional development. Training is planned carefully to support the school's development priorities but also to consider the interests and progress of individual staff members. Staff say they enjoy working at the school and are supportive of the changes that are being made.
- Leaders now collect a lot of information about individual pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour. However, this information is not yet used to identify trends or evaluate the progress of different groups of pupils efficiently and effectively.

Governance of the school

- Since the last inspection, the governing board has undergone a review of its effectiveness. Members have been quick to heed the advice and build on recommendations. Governors now use their experience and expertise to good effect. They fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously and provide strong challenge to leaders.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's effectiveness and have identified areas of ongoing training to ensure that they continue to make an active contribution to the life of the school.
- Members of the management committee are diligent in carrying out their responsibilities to safeguard pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding policies and procedures take into account government guidelines, are fit for purpose and are followed by staff.
- Staff are vigilant in ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils. They have a clear understanding of how to recognise safeguarding concerns and what to do if they identify them. Records of behaviour and safeguarding incidents are thorough. Appropriate and timely action is taken to ensure that pupils are safe in school.
- The designated safeguarding team works in partnership with external agencies to ensure that pupils' safeguarding needs are met. This includes contact with social care, health and mental health professionals and services for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those pupils who are in the care of the local authority.
- All staff have completed training in safeguarding and positive handling. Staff have a range of additional skills, knowledge and experience that support their work with pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has improved and is now good. Leaders and staff have worked successfully to remove the barriers to pupils' learning. Activities are planned carefully to interest and engage pupils. The majority of pupils enjoy learning and, as a result, make good progress from their individual starting points.
- Expectations of what pupils can achieve have been raised. Staff model and reinforce high expectations for pupils' learning and their behaviour. This helps pupils to work with purpose and encourages them to have a good attitude to learning.
- Teachers use questioning effectively. They support pupils to recall and make links with prior learning and develop their thinking. Teachers' questioning probes and extends pupils' understanding.
- Learning support assistants (LSAs) support learning and engagement effectively. They provide the right amount of support to help pupils succeed, while making sure that pupils are encouraged to work independently. Teachers and LSAs are quick to pick up on those pupils who show signs that they may be struggling and are skilful at redirecting pupils' attention to their work.
- Teaching is highly effective in English. In this subject, explicit teaching and feedback support pupils to gain a clear understanding of what they are learning and the next steps to take to improve.
- The teaching of writing is good in English. The emphasis on spelling, grammar and punctuation in this subject supports pupils to write for a range of purposes. This fluency in writing is not seen in all subjects across the curriculum. In some subjects, spelling errors remain unchecked. This slows the progress the pupils make.
- Reading is embedded within the curriculum. Teachers support pupils to read daily and

a wide variety of reading materials are available and well used in all classrooms.

- Pupils are given many opportunities to experiment, explore and investigate. In bushcraft, for example, pupils build on prior knowledge to develop survival skills. These skills are cemented through most curriculum subjects. Pupils access a variety of clubs and activities which range from sport, model making, horticulture and art through to additional academic sessions in science, English and mathematics. Opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills, however, are sometimes missed. This impacts on the progress pupils make in this subject.
- Staff take the opportunity to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider world through the enrichment curriculum. This includes introducing them to fundamental British values and helping them to understand what it means to be a good citizen. Pupils have learned about democracy through electing a representative to the junior leadership team and by taking part in debate and a vote about whether the UK should leave the European Union.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Teachers and other adults take the time to get to know pupils and to build strong and trusting relationships with them. This contributes positively to the school's nurturing environment, in which pupils gain confidence and improve their self-esteem. Pupils spoken with agreed that they all had a trusted adult within the school who they could go to for help or advice.
- Staff welcome pupils at the start of each day. Teachers and support staff use the time between arrival and assembly to ensure that pupils are calm, well fed and ready to learn. This ensures that the school day gets off to a good start. Adults model respect and caring behaviour in the way they interact with the pupils.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They say that bullying happens but they trust staff to deal with incidents effectively. Pupils who made their views known say they are happy to be in school and feel secure. A new anti-bullying initiative is teaching younger pupils to develop their understanding of what bullying is and to be involved in a mentoring programme to further support others.
- Through the wider curriculum, pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and healthy both in and out of school. Sessions on healthy eating and internet safety support understanding and provide tools to help minimise risk. Partnership work with the local police force has allowed the pupils to be involved in lessons about knife crime, gang violence and the 'Prison Me! No Way!' project.
- Careers education, advice and guidance are strengths of the school. From entry into the school, pupils are supported by the transitions worker to ensure a smooth pathway through the school and into further education, employment or training. In 2018, all Year 11 pupils moved into a college placement following their time at Elemore Hall School.
- Seven pupils attend full-time alternative provision at Personalised Alternative

Curriculum Centre (PACC) to support their specific social, emotional and mental health need. Regular checks are made on their attendance. Staff from the school and PACC meet three times a year to discuss pupils' progress. Leaders acknowledge that the relationship between school leaders and PACC could be strengthened to ensure that the pupils who attend alternative provision receive the same quality of education and welfare that is provided at the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Staff hold high expectations for pupils' behaviour, to which pupils respond well. Pupils are increasingly changing their own behaviour or supporting their peers to make better choices, for example one pupil reminding another to mind his language when speaking to an inspector.
- Approaches to managing pupils' behaviour are effective and the positive ethos of the school is evident. Staff are consistent with both the message and the consequence and are fully supported by the leadership team.
- Typically, pupils are focused and responsive in lessons. They show pride in their achievements and look after their books well. Positive relationships between teachers and pupils ensure that any low-level disruption in the classroom is managed calmly and effectively and does not disrupt the learning of others.
- Attendance has improved over time but remains below average. Prior to being admitted to this school, pupils often had very low attendance at their previous school. Attendance is often affected by the specific and complex circumstances of some pupils. Leaders do all they can to support families and pupils in getting to school and participating in education. Some individual pupils' attendance rapidly improves as they settle in to the school. However, too many pupils are still persistently absent and this impacts negatively on their achievement.
- The rate of fixed-term exclusion has dropped significantly since the last inspection. This is due to the revision of policies and procedures, alongside the support and training of key staff. Leaders have plans in place to ensure that this downward trend continues.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- As a result of effective leadership and good teaching, pupils' progress has improved since the previous inspection. Often, pupils join the school with gaps in their skills and knowledge. From their varied starting points, pupils now make good progress across the school in a wide range of subjects. By the end of Year 11, typically, pupils attain qualifications in a range of core and vocational subjects. All pupils leave with qualifications that support them to gain places in further education or training. Good careers advice, pupils' strong personal development and their good progress prepare them well for the next steps in education, training or employment.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' skills and knowledge when they join the school are accurately assessed. This, along with the information received from their previous schooling, is used to good effect to plan both academic learning and personal

development. Systems to check pupils' knowledge and skills and to measure pupils' academic progress as they move up through the school have been strengthened since the previous inspection. These now provide staff with an accurate picture of the attainment and progress of individual pupils. However, this information is not yet used to effectively identify variances in the performance of different pupil groups.

- In English, pupils' progress is particularly good. Arrangements to assess pupils' skills and knowledge and to measure their progress in this subject are particularly well developed. Pupils undertake work that is very well matched to their individual needs as a result. Pupils are provided with good opportunities to use and apply their reading and writing skills across a range of curriculum subjects. However, pupils do not consistently use and apply their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills to the standard they are capable of in their written work in all subjects.
- Although leaders have taken effective action to improve pupils' achievement in mathematics since the last inspection, their progress in this subject is currently not as good as it is in English. Opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills are well developed in many subjects, such as science, but they are still sometimes overlooked in mathematics. This continues to hamper the achievement of some pupils.
- As well as making good progress in academic subjects, pupils also make noticeable gains in their emotional and social development and in their ability to make positive choices about their behaviour. This has helped them to feel more positive about school and allowed them to experience success in their learning. The persistent absence of a small number of pupils has a negative impact on achievement, especially in key stage 4.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have revised the curriculum in key stage 4 to enable pupils to study for awards and qualifications. More pupils are now working towards GCSE qualifications in English language, mathematics and science, as well as a range of vocational options, such as horticulture, art and resistant materials. A GCSE in English literature has been introduced during the academic year 2018/19 and two pupils are entered for this qualification.
- Disadvantaged pupils are given additional opportunities to develop their English and mathematics skills through one-to-one tuition, which helps to narrow the gap between them and their peers and to ensure that they can access the GCSE qualifications on offer.

School details

Unique reference number	114337
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10087530

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	80 (73 at the school and seven at alternative provision)
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Walsh
Headteacher	Richard Royle
Telephone number	0191 372 0275
Website	www.elemorehallschool.com
Email address	elemore@durhamlearning.net
Date of previous inspection	18–19 January 2017

Information about this school

- Elemore Hall School has planned places for 86 secondary-aged pupils who have an education, health and care plan for social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Pupils can join the school at any time between Year 7 and 11.
- There are significantly more boys than girls currently on roll.
- The wider curriculum offers provision to all pupils both after school and in the evening.
- The school has 25 residential places available to pupils four nights a week between Monday and Friday.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is over 80%. This is considerably higher than the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- Seven pupils attend off-site alternative education at PACC, which is based at another

Durham local authority special school.

- One pupil is currently receiving home tuition and a further pupil is receiving education through the home and hospital service.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across a wide range of lessons and learning activities at the school.
- Pupils' written work was scrutinised in lessons and in their books.
- Inspectors observed pupils' conduct while pupils were arriving at school, as well as at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils both informally and formally and to members of the staff team. Inspectors considered the 47 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were insufficient responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, but inspectors took account of four free-text responses from parents.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, two assistant headteachers, the head of support services and middle leaders.
- A meeting was held with the chair and other members of the governing body.
- An inspector visited the alternative education provision used by the school.
- A meeting was held with the school's improvement partner.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school self-evaluation report, the school development plan and analysis of the spending of additional funding received.
- Inspectors also reviewed minutes of meetings of the board of governors, a report from the review of governance, learning and assessment, and information relating to pupils' attendance and achievement. Safeguarding documentation and records relating to behaviour were also examined.

Inspection team

Tricia Stevens, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Moira Banks

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 2019