

Don Valley Academy

Jossey Lane, Scawthorpe, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN5 9DD

Inspection dates

2–3 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	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal has turned this school around. His inclusive vision, high expectations and deep care for his staff and his pupils are clear to see. He leads the school by example.
- He is well supported by a highly effective senior team and members of the trust who are experienced in school improvement.
- The behaviour of pupils has improved markedly. Teachers use systems to manage pupils' behaviour consistently. Leaders also give effective support to pupils who struggle to focus in lessons. As a result, pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils' personal development has a high priority at Don Valley. Leaders think deeply about this aspect of education. 'Life' lessons, and assemblies, plus strategies such as 'the random acts of kindness tree' and 'above and beyond rewards' all foster tolerance and respect within the school community.
- Teaching is consistently good. Leaders have developed a structure to lessons that is consistently applied. Teachers use pupil-progress information well in their planning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and question pupils effectively.
- The enrichment programme is a strength of the school. A vast range of activities is on offer to pupils at the end of the school day.
- Leaders have made sure that the progress that pupils make and the standards that they reach are improving quickly and securely. However, some pupils have weaker standards of literacy that have not been addressed at this point. In addition, some most-able pupils are not reaching the standards of which they are capable.
- Students in the sixth form are also benefiting from the 'reboot' of the school. Their programmes of study are enriched by thoughtful work experience programmes and other community activities. Students' progress on academic programmes, however, is slower than that on vocational courses.
- Rates of attendance have improved. The use of fixed-term exclusion has decreased dramatically. Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe. Behaviour in and around the building is calm. The majority of pupils show respect to each other and to adults.
- There has been a step-change in the quality of education over the past 18 months. This is now a good school. Staff and pupils overwhelmingly agree and are positive about the school.
- The mission of Don Valley is 'changing lives'. In a short period of time, leaders have already ensured that this mission is realised for many pupils at school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the progress that pupils make and the standards that they reach.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that any gaps in pupils' literacy are addressed
 - making sure that the needs of the most able pupils are met and that they reach the standards of which they are capable, including in English
 - ensuring that the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified and addressed more effectively.
- Further improve the progress that students make on academic programmes in the sixth form.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The new principal and his team have transformed the school over the past 18 months. Pupils now behave well and come to school ready to learn. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently strong. School leaders are capable, committed and highly effective. The principal leads with strength and integrity. He balances the need for academic progress with the wider development of pupils very well. He has been pivotal to the 'reboot' of this school.
- The principal, supported by the systems and structures from Delta Academies Trust, has ensured that members of staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. There is a high level of consistency in the way that behaviour systems are applied, in the way in which the progress that pupils make is tracked, and in the way that lessons are delivered.
- The key to this rapid improvement is the way in which new requirements have been put into place. Everyone now knows their role and is crystal clear as to what is expected of them. This includes both pupils and members of staff. However, what is more, leaders have matched these expectations with a deep level of support and a fostering of personal development. A wide range of opportunities and enrichments are available for pupils. Leaders place a high priority on developing the leadership skills of staff members.
- Systems that leaders use to track the progress that pupils are making, and the standards that they are reaching, are accurate and comprehensive. Leaders use this information to intervene when pupils are falling behind. As a result, the progress that pupils are making is improving strongly. Although there are still areas that require improvement, such as in the standards of literacy for some pupils and the progress that most-able pupils make, improvements in outcomes are both secure and sustained.
- Leaders have an excellent understanding of their school. Their self-evaluation is accurate, and development plans uncompromising. Leaders exude high expectations for all. They are 'hands on' and have a visible presence at school.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is strong. Leaders support individual teachers and teaching assistants to improve their craft. Professional development has a high priority, and all members of staff benefit from the programmes on offer.
- Middle leaders are strong and knowledgeable about their subjects or their area of responsibility. Leaders are aware that there is still some work to do to ensure that the needs of pupils with SEND are identified and addressed more effectively.
- The curriculum on offer to pupils is rich and varied. Not only do pupils have the opportunity to study the arts, design and technology and physical education, pupils also benefit from enrichment opportunities at the end of each day. This is a strength of the school. These opportunities include: revision sessions for a variety of subjects; musical theatre; trampolining; anti-bullying ambassadors; chess club; Don Valley Pride; and student leadership meetings, among many others.
- Many parents and carers are positive about the direction of the school. Some reported

concerns about the changes in expectations of behaviour. Pupils and staff are overwhelmingly positive about the improvements that they have seen and experienced. Inspectors agree. This school offers a good standard of education to its pupils. One member of staff encapsulated the rate of improvement when they told inspectors 'Don Valley is going places.'

Governance of the school

- The 'academy advisory body' (AAB) is a 'scrutiny sub-committee of the Delta board' and is responsible for standards, behaviour and safeguarding. Members of the AAB know the strengths of the school and where it needs further development. They have access to a wide range of information about the performance of the school. They use this effectively to bring support and challenge to the senior team. Members of the AAB bring a range of experience to their roles, including education management.
- Members of the trust and the AAB have ensured that all of the statutory requirements for safeguarding are met and arrangements to keep students safe are effective.
- Delta Academies Trust has a wealth of experience in school improvement. They understand the position of the school and have supported the principal in developing an improvement strategy. This has brought significant positive change. The trust and chief executive officer support the principal effectively. They have high expectations of the senior team, but also bring challenge when needed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Systems and procedures used to ensure that pupils are protected are effective. Safeguarding training for members of staff is up to date and policies are comprehensive. They meet legal requirements.
- Leaders are passionate about meeting the needs of individuals. A variety of strategies are used to help pupils to overcome their individual emotional or behavioural needs, including programmes based at school. Sometimes, leaders use alternative settings to support pupils. Whatever strategies are used, leaders maintain a keen eye on issues of safeguarding and attendance. Communication between different settings is strong, and pupils are kept safe.
- Any concerns that adults have about pupils who are more vulnerable or who need additional support are dealt with effectively. School leaders deal with any potential child protection issues immediately. They are tenacious in ensuring that the pupils in their care receive the support to which they are entitled.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching at school is characterised by a high level of consistency between classrooms. Leaders have established systems and structures in order to raise expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons. Due to a high level of consistency, pupils know exactly what to expect. They focus well in class and make strong progress.

- Typically, teachers successfully link learning in lessons to what has been covered previously. They have good subject knowledge, and question pupils well to push their understanding of the topic or concept.
- Pupils told inspectors how at the beginning of every lesson they are presented with a task to 'connect' the lesson with prior learning. They also spoke of the need to 'demonstrate' what has been learned at the end of a lesson. Inspectors saw these techniques being used successfully.
- Teachers tailor tasks to meet the needs of the pupils in their class. In each lesson, four tasks are offered to pupils, depending on how well they understand concepts in that subject area. These are colour coded: blue, yellow, green and red. Pupils know this system well, and appreciate the way that it helps to make sure that they are challenged in lessons.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment is strong and improving. Nonetheless, at the time of the inspection there were some areas of relative weakness. Sometimes the most able pupils are not pushed enough to reach the standards of which they are capable. In addition, pupils with SEND are not always correctly identified and so their needs are not addressed effectively.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say that they are happy and feel safe in school. They show respect towards each other and to adults. They say that bullying seldom occurs and that unkind behaviour is rare. They know who to speak to if they feel unsafe or unhappy. Pupils are confident that they would receive support in such circumstances.
- Pupils' wider development is fostered through the curriculum. 'Life' lessons, assemblies and vertical mentoring groups (VMGs) are pivotal here. VMGs are pastoral groups made up from pupils of different ages. Themes such as tolerance, democracy, racism, homophobia, relationships and environmentalism are covered through these activities. Leaders think carefully about how links can be made with these themes in different subjects. These programmes are thoughtfully and meticulously planned.
- Leaders want Don Valley Academy to be at the heart of the local community. Charity work and links with the community have a high priority. During the time of the inspection, for example, there was an attempt to raise £10,000 in 10 weeks to contribute to the purchasing of an air ambulance. Pupils were well on the way, having raised seven thousand pounds in the first seven weeks. Events such as staff bungee jumps and hair shaving contributed to the sense of urgency in this endeavour.
- Leaders develop a sense of respect and pride among pupils in a strategic way. Strategies such as 'principal's brunches', 'the random acts of kindness tree' and 'above and beyond rewards' aim to catch pupils showing kindness and respect. A strong pupil leadership structure, 'graduation ceremonies' and the enrichment programme, all underline leaders' commitment to building up pupils' self-esteem and supporting their personal development.

- Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. They come to school prepared for the school day. In classrooms, most pupils are enthusiastic and try their best.
- Pupils benefit from a well-thought-out programme of information, advice and guidance to help them navigate their next steps, whether these be employment, training or further education. Very few pupils leave Year 11 without having firm plans for the future.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils and members of staff say that behaviour has improved significantly at school. Inspectors agree. Behaviour has been 'turned around'.
- Members of staff now have high expectations in as far as pupils' behaviour is concerned. Behaviour systems are simple, they are fully understood by pupils, and they are consistently applied by members of staff. Members of the leadership team are on hand to support members of staff in this regard.
- As a result of improved standards of behaviour, pupils feel safe at school. They are happy to tell others that they are proud of their school. Pupils' conduct around school is generally orderly. The vast majority of pupils are polite, courteous and respectful. There is a 'buzz' at school, and pupils are caught up in the positivity that exudes from leaders, teachers and other members of staff.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their rates of attendance. Attendance has improved significantly and the proportion of pupils that are persistently absent has decreased. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND has also improved markedly. Leaders have again applied simple systems consistently, which has had a positive impact. Leaders have used a variety of strategies for pupils who particularly struggle to attend school, including the use of a minibus to collect pupils on occasions.
- Improved standards of behaviour are also evidenced by a reduction in the number of times consequences are applied at school. In addition, once that new behaviour expectations were understood by pupils, an initial spike in the number of fixed-term exclusions has been followed by a dramatic decrease in their use.
- School leaders use a variety of techniques to ensure that pupils behave well around school and in lessons. 'The Bridge', 'reflection' and the 'personalised learning centre' all aim to support pupils' individual needs in order to help them return to classrooms as quickly as possible. These needs may be emotional, behavioural, medical or social. These internal facilities, together with systems that are clear and understood by staff and pupils, have resulted in a calm and purposeful atmosphere at school.
- Some pupils attend alternative provision. This is well matched to their needs and helps them to focus on their learning and behave appropriately. There is strong communication between Don Valley Academy and these settings. Leaders know these pupils' rates of attendance and the progress that they are making. Safeguarding procedures are in place to help to ensure that these pupils are safe.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- There was too much variation in the progress that pupils made by the time they left Year 11 in 2017 and 2018. Too many pupils did not make the progress of which they were capable. For example, the progress that pupils made in English and humanities in 2017 and 2018 was below the national average. In addition, the progress that most-able pupils made in 2018 was low in English, science, humanities and modern languages.
- Nevertheless, in 2018 improvements were seen in the standards that pupils reached. For example, the proportion of pupils that attained grade 5 in both English and mathematics (a 'strong pass') increased by 10 percentage points and reached the national average. The standards that disadvantaged pupils reached improved markedly in some areas too. For example, the proportion of these pupils that attained grade 5 in both English and mathematics also increased by 10 percentage points.
- Leaders were also successful in improving the progress that pupils made in mathematics in 2018. Pupils made, on average, half a grade more progress in this subject by the time they left school in 2018 than their peers had made in 2017. This includes the progress that disadvantaged pupils made.
- The changes that school leaders have made to the culture of the school has had an immediate impact on pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching. This is now also having an impact on the rates of progress that pupils are making. Pupils' progress is improving quickly and securely.
- Although the rate of improvement is substantial, outcomes require improvement because there are still some weaknesses in the profile of achievement at school. Progress in English is lagging behind that of some other subjects because many pupils have gaps in their literacy that have not as yet been addressed. In addition, some of the most able pupils are not pushed far enough to reach the standards of which they are capable.
- The systems that leaders use to track the progress that pupils are making at school are precise and highly refined. Leaders use this information to help pupils that are underperforming in certain subjects. Teachers use this information to identify exactly where individuals are struggling and then intervene accordingly. This, combined with a stronger profile of teaching and learning, is underpinning improvements in the progress that pupils are making.
- These systems are having a positive impact on disadvantaged pupils. Additional funding to support these pupils is being used effectively, because leaders know where additional support is needed. The progress that this group of pupils is making is improving at a pace.
- Where leaders have identified the specific needs of pupils with SEND, the support that these pupils receive is effective. However, currently some pupils may have needs that are yet to be identified or addressed.
- Inspection evidence confirms that leaders are fully aware of the current profile of pupil progress at school. They now have a track record of improvement. Outcomes are improving at a pace but are currently not yet good overall.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- There has been a similar step-change in the quality of education for sixth formers as there has been in the rest of the school. Strong systems have been established by which leaders are able to track the progress that students are making and the standards that they are reaching. As a result, teachers now quickly intervene to ensure that students understand complex concepts and build on their knowledge effectively.
- The expectations of what students can achieve are now high. Teachers use their expert subject knowledge to good effect. For example, in sociology, pupils were seen to be engaging with different theorists and teachers were seen helping students to make deep links between theories and prior learning.
- Programmes of study are rich in opportunity. Pupils have access to relevant work experience, and a variety of volunteering and charity programmes. Of late, students have led a project in tackling loneliness among some local elderly people, for example. Sixth-form students are fully included in the enrichment programme and student leadership opportunities.
- Leaders ensure that students develop employability and life skills. A comprehensive programme is on offer, which includes useful information on how to stay safe as a young person, in addition to careers education and support in relation to applying to further education or university.
- Students are committed to their studies. They are well presented and act as good role models for younger pupils.
- Leaders are having a positive impact on outcomes for students in the sixth form. Students attend school more regularly now. A greater proportion of pupils complete their courses than in the past. A greater proportion of students are successful if they resit GCSE English or mathematics in the sixth form than in the recent past. Leaders are successful in ensuring that the majority of students leave Don Valley Academy with concrete plans for the future. Very few students leave without having secured places in further education or employment.
- The progress that students make on academic courses lags behind that of those on vocational programmes. Leaders are aware of this. There is some variation in between subjects in the progress that students make. Nonetheless, rates of progress are improving strongly, mirroring other key stages at school.

School details

Unique reference number	137472
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	10087559

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 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,023
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	110
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Anthony Long
Principal	Richard Brooke
Telephone number	01302 651035
Website	www.donvalleyacademy.org.uk
Email address	info@donvalleyacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 November – 1 December 2016

Information about this school

- Don Valley Academy is an average-sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- The school is part of Delta Academies Trust. According to its scheme of delegation, the board of directors has responsibility for the strategic direction of the trust, finance and the appointment of the chief executive and the principals of the academies. The AAB is a 'scrutiny sub-committee of the Delta board' and is responsible for standards, behaviour and safeguarding.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average.

- The school works in collaboration with outside providers as part of the curriculum on offer for pupils. At the time of the inspection, these were: St Wilfred's Academy, The Levett School and 'JASP', which is part of Maple Medical Pupil Referral Unit.
- Since the time of the last inspection there have been changes to the senior leadership team, including a new principal, a new associate principal and a new vice-principal. Several members of the extended leadership team are also new to post.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning and groups of pupils working in all key stages at the school. Inspectors observed learning jointly with the principal and other members of the senior team and discussed what was seen. Learning in the sixth form was also observed.
- Inspectors observed pupils when moving around the school between lessons and at social times. They talked to pupils in lessons about their experience at school and they looked at work in pupils' books. Inspectors talked to four specific groups of pupils and sixth-form students to hear their views about the school and about the behaviour of other pupils.
- Inspectors held meetings with members of the trust and the AAB. An inspector spoke with the chief executive officer. Inspectors also spoke with senior and middle leaders, including those responsible for standards of behaviour and safeguarding. An inspector spoke with those responsible for the progress and support of pupils with SEND. Inspectors held meetings with those responsible for the progress of disadvantaged pupils and careers information, advice and guidance. Meetings were held with those responsible for the sixth form.
- Inspectors took account of the 81 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. The 34 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, were also considered, including any free-text comments.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documentation including: the school's view of its own performance; monitoring records; information about pupils' progress; improvement planning; and records of behaviour and attendance. They looked closely at records relating to safeguarding and child protection, and at policies, including those published on the school's website.

Inspection team

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Natasha Greenough	Ofsted Inspector
Eddie Wilkes	Ofsted Inspector

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