

Inspection of Wyvern Academy

Egglestone View, Darlington, County Durham DL3 9SH

Inspection dates: 12–13 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

What is it like to attend this school?

There has been a lot of change at Wyvern Academy recently. Pupils and some parents have been disappointed with this. However, things have started to settle down and are beginning to improve with the arrival of a new headteacher. Pupils and staff are positive about getting the school back on its feet.

Expectations of what pupils can achieve have slipped. Pupils have gaps in what they should know because of a disorganised curriculum and changes in staffing. Over time, the expectations of what pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can achieve have not been high enough. Leaders' aspirations for these pupils are much higher now.

Most pupils feel happy and safe, because relationships between staff and pupils are good. Bullying does not happen often. Where bullying does occur, pupils say that teachers will sort it out quickly.

Most pupils behave well around the school and in lessons. Pupils say that behaviour has started to improve after the headteacher introduced a new behaviour management system. However, some pupils still do not meet the high expectations that staff now have for them. These pupils are spending too much time out of lessons because of their behaviour.

Pupils understand that staff care about them. Pupils learn important life skills. Through the 'growth' programme, pupils learn how to stay safe and how to be ready for life after the school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

More recently, new leaders have got a grip of the school. They have thought carefully about how to make sure that pupils learn more and remember what they learn. They have planned schemes of work that aim to close gaps in pupils' understanding. The curriculum has improved in most subjects because it makes sure that pupils learn things in the right order. Although things are improving, there is still a lot to do before pupils receive a good quality of education.

Younger pupils are benefiting from the improved curriculum offer and more stable staffing. Although plans for 'topics' are in place in different subjects, they do not plug the gaps in older pupils' knowledge. For example, pupils' understanding in science is sometimes held back, because their basic mathematical knowledge is weak. Work can be demanding from time to time. However, this is not always the case. Some pupils, especially the most able, want to know more and to extend their knowledge further.

Pupils with SEND can study the same subjects as other pupils. Some teachers use the information about pupils' additional learning needs effectively to help these

pupils to do better. However, some pupils with SEND feel that they need more support in lessons. Leaders have taken action to start to improve provision for these pupils.

Leaders have introduced a new behaviour management system recently. Most pupils understand and support this new system. Pupils' behaviour is improving. At lunchtime, it was nice to see pupils socialising calmly, playing table tennis and getting on together. Nevertheless, some pupils are regularly removed from lessons. This allows other pupils to learn, but it means that those who are removed are falling further behind. Leaders know that they must deal with the pupils who regularly misbehave. Attendance is improving, but some pupils do not attend the school regularly. Again, leaders know that they need to do more to help these pupils attend the school more often.

Most pupils are polite and friendly. They are keen to learn. Pupils receive impartial guidance about their next steps after the school. They have opportunities to take part in many activities such as sport, science and technology events. Equality is taken seriously. For example, girls are encouraged to play cricket and boys are encouraged to play rounders. During the inspection, the school was hosting a cross country competition in which many pupils participated. Although there are many opportunities for pupils, some pupils lack confidence to get involved in the full life of the school. Pupils cannot always discuss and debate ideas or their opinions in a considered way.

Teachers feel valued by leaders and governors. They care about the local community and are very loyal to the school. Supported by the multi-academy trust, teachers have been given more time for training and meeting together to plan learning. The trust recognised that change was needed and has taken action in this regard. These actions are beginning to influence the quality of education pupils receive, but it is early days. Subject leaders are becoming more effective in their role. However, there is still work to do to ensure they are as effective as they could be.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders make sure that they make the correct safeguarding checks about adults before they work in the school.

Leaders ensure that staff know how to keep pupils safe. Staff know the safeguarding risks that could affect pupils in the local community. Staff report concerns appropriately and work effectively with other external agencies, when necessary.

Pupils are taught how to protect themselves from the risks they might face outside of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils with SEND do not always have their specific needs identified. Some teachers do not use the information that is available about pupils' needs to plan learning effectively. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders should give more attention to ensuring that pupils with SEND have their needs clearly identified and acted upon by all teachers.
- The improvements in the quality of the curriculum and behaviour are recent. As a result, the older pupils have gaps in their learning that teachers need to help them to fill. Leaders should ensure that action is taken to close pupils' gaps in knowledge at key stage 4.
- The actions taken by leaders to improve attendance have been effective, but a culture of good attendance needs to be embedded. Some pupils still do not attend the school regularly enough. Leaders need to monitor closely attendance for key groups such as pupils with SEND or who speak English as an additional language. Leaders must ensure that the recently expanded attendance team has the skills and support to be effective in promoting good attendance.
- The behaviour system is very new. It is helping lessons to proceed without interruption but is not yet addressing the causes of poor behaviour. Some pupils are falling behind and losing lesson time as a consequence of poor behaviour choices. Leaders now need to consider how to help pupils change their behaviour and prevent pupils from becoming stuck in the behaviour system.
- Some pupils lack confidence and resilience. While opportunities for pupils' personal development are improving, leaders should ensure that they develop the curriculum further to build pupils' character and resilience.
- New leadership is in place at all levels within the trust, the governing body and the school. This has led to a change of culture and a clearer plan for improvement. Leaders at all levels within the school, particularly heads of subject, now need the appropriate support and resource to secure this improvement.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	143845
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10110548
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	504
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Woodmancy
Headteacher	Julian Leader
Website	http://wyvernacademy.org/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is the first standard inspection of Wyvern Academy since it opened on 1 December 2016.
- The headteacher took up his post on 1 September 2019. The trust has a new chief executive officer and regional director, both appointed in the previous six months.
- A small number of pupils attend off-site alternative provision at Rise Carr College, Home and Hospital Teaching Service, Darlington College, Right Trax and Martin Gray Football Academy.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with a wide range of senior staff. These included the headteacher and assistant headteachers. We also met with support staff, subject leaders and members of the trust and governing body. An inspector spoke on the telephone with one of the alternative providers used by the school.
- We looked closely at the curriculum through ‘deep dives.’ We conducted deep

dives in English, science, geography and history. As part of the deep dives, we talked with leaders and teachers about those subjects and we looked at their plans for teaching. We visited lessons in those subjects and then talked to pupils about their learning.

- We met with those responsible for safeguarding in the school. We spoke with staff and pupils about safeguarding. We checked the school's arrangements for recruiting staff.

Inspection team

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