

Inspection of Collingwood School & Media Arts College

Stobhillgate, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2HA

Inspection dates: 7–8 January 2020

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

The new headteacher is ambitious and very enthusiastic. Her enthusiasm is infectious. Teachers now have a spring in their step. They believe in themselves and they believe in their pupils. Expectations are high across the school. Although the curriculum could be even better in some subjects, the school is improving. An example of this is the wide range of qualifications that pupils can now take.

Pupils leave school ready for the next stages of their lives. They are well prepared for the world outside of Collingwood, both socially and emotionally. This includes students in the sixth form.

Members of staff are fully committed to pupils at Collingwood. As one parent said, 'From very first day the support from the school has been incredible, it is like my child is a different person.' Teachers know the individual needs of pupils and provide for them well. Pupils work hard. Their behaviour is excellent. They are polite and friendly. There is no bullying. If anyone is unkind, adults help to sort it out quickly.

The range of opportunities available for pupils is impressive. The recent 'Collingwood's got talent' event is an example of how leaders celebrate all of their pupils. Parents and staff were moved to see pupils on stage singing with confidence. Others showed off their skills, including one who completed the Rubik's cube in record time. School leaders look to spot pupils' talents and to develop them.

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

The headteacher is turning this school around. She is highly capable and ambitious for the school. She has made positive changes to improve the quality of education. Her staff and governors are on side. The school is back on track and improving strongly.

Teachers know the individual needs of pupils at school very well. They use the information in pupils' education, health and care plans to organise activities that help pupils to develop their skills. An example of this is the way in which teachers weave additional therapies into pupils' timetables. Lego therapy, boxing therapy and counselling are available, for example. Animal therapy also helps pupils to focus on their learning when in classrooms. Susie the dog helps too. Teachers adapt lessons to meet the needs of pupils well.

Specialist subject teaching is now in place in secondary classes. In many subjects, curriculum leaders' plans are strong. They help teachers to plan lessons so that pupils develop their understanding step by step. Key knowledge is prioritised. In design and technology, for example, repetition of important information helps pupils to remember it long term. In mathematics, teachers' planning is very logical and structured. The mathematics that pupils study becomes more complex over time. Teachers ensure that pupils understand each small step before they move on. Leaders know that some work is needed to make sure that all subjects are equally

as strong. Leaders are also changing how pupils are assessed and they are correct to do so. They want to help teachers to pinpoint where pupils need to improve even more precisely.

Pupils enjoy reading. Teachers prioritise reading in tutor time and library time. The library is a well-stocked and attractive place to read with a range of high-quality books for pupils to choose from. Some older pupils are still learning to read. Teachers make sure that books for these pupils do not include unfamiliar sounds or words but are still interesting. Staff have been trained to deliver a consistent approach when teaching phonics.

There is a clear focus on preparing pupils for life after school at Collingwood. School leaders have made sure that pupils leave with a range of qualifications and certificates to help them as they move on. Teachers are successful in developing pupils' social skills and independence. No pupils leave school without firm plans for the future. Teachers celebrate the uniqueness and potential of each individual. The range of additional opportunities on offer for pupils is stunning. Lego therapy, horticulture, international projects, the Mad Hatter's tea party ... the list goes on. The focus on media as a subject at school is reflected in many of these opportunities.

Students in the sixth form benefit from a structured programme that also helps to prepare them for adulthood. This includes workplace skills where appropriate. Students practise travelling independently and other life skills through 'social opportunities' in the curriculum. Students also support pupils in the main school. Teachers are knowledgeable about the courses that students are studying. Students develop their English and mathematical skills well to help them when they move on from Collingwood. Students in the sixth form enjoy school, attend regularly and are punctual.

Pupils' behaviour throughout the school is exemplary. Teachers are experts in dealing with the behaviour of pupils in their care. In lessons pupils listen to their teachers and to each other. If they are ever distracted, staff nudge them back on track. Those pupils who struggle to behave receive targeted therapeutic support in specialist classes, such as in the nurture group. All of this weaves together very well. The school is a happy, calm and welcoming environment.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have made sure that the school's policies, procedures and record-keeping are up to date. Members of staff have the training needed to help them to keep pupils safe. Staff have a good understanding of what to do if they have a concern about a pupil.

There is a culture of care at school. Staff understand the additional needs of their pupils. Staff act with tenderness and respect. Such is the commitment to keeping

pupils safe, leaders offer places at school to pupils who do not attend other schools. Through 'Collingwood connect' school leaders take these new pupils under their wing. They work well with them. These pupils usually re-engage in education and improve their attendance markedly.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, such as mathematics and design and technology, the curriculum is clearly planned and sequenced. Pupils build on their knowledge securely over time. This is not the case in all subjects. In addition, sometimes curriculum plans for secondary pupils do not build upon what they know and can do from their time in the primary phase. Leaders should make sure that curriculum plans have clear progression over time so that pupils know more and remember more in each subject.
- In some areas of the school the use of assessment is highly effective. For example, when pupils start at Collingwood they spend some time in 'stepping stones' getting used to school. Here, teachers work to identify exactly what pupils can do and what their next steps are. This works well. Leaders are aware that they need to ensure that ongoing assessment improves. In this way, teachers will be able to help pupils to build upon their knowledge step by step more effectively in different subject areas.

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 are the school and you are 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	122389
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10110628
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	163
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Keith Faulkner
Headteacher	Gillian Linkleter
Website	www.collingwoodmediacollege.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Collingwood School and Media Arts College caters for young people with a range of learning difficulties. Many pupils have autism spectrum disorder. Some have associated behavioural and social difficulties. Some pupils have a range of complex needs including speech, language and communication difficulties. Some pupils have social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- School leaders do not use any alternative provision for pupils as part of the curriculum.
- The school caters for young people between the ages of 2 to 19. At the time of the inspection there were no children on roll in early years.
- Since the previous inspection in June 2018 a new headteacher has been appointed. She took up position in April 2019. There have been significant changes to the structure and staffing of the senior team. There is also a new chair of the governing body.

Information about this inspection

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

- We met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and members of the senior leadership team. We talked to curriculum leaders and those with responsibility for individual subjects. We met members of the governing body, including the chair. We met with the school improvement partner. We spoke to leaders with responsibility for pupils' personal development and their behaviour. We spoke to colleagues responsible for the sixth form. We spoke to the special educational needs coordinator and looked at the systems for supporting individual pupils' needs.
- We looked in detail at English (including early reading), mathematics, art, and design and technology. We talked to leaders and teachers about their curriculum plans. We visited lessons in these subjects. We spoke to pupils about their learning, including sixth-form students. We looked at pupils' work, including files from students in the sixth form.
- We met with those responsible for safeguarding. We looked at a range of documentation linked to safeguarding including: child protection policies and procedures; absence data; information about how pupils' behaviour is managed; information about how more vulnerable pupils are supported. We talked to pupils during the inspection about how safe they feel.
- We took into account the 22 responses to Ofsted's online parents' questionnaire, Parent View, including any free-text comments. We also considered the 32 responses to the survey for staff.

Inspection team

Michael Wardle, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Moira Banks

Ofsted Inspector

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