

Inspection of a good school: Catcote Academy

Catcote Road, Hartlepool TS25 4EZ

Inspection dates:

3–4 March 2020

Outcome

Catcote Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending Catcote Academy. Pupils really like their school, especially that they 'focus on what we can do, not what we can't'.

Pupils feel happy and safe at school because they know that adults care about them. Pupils feel that bullying happens at Catcote rarely, if ever, and, if it does, the staff act quickly to prevent it reoccurring. Most pupils behave very well and are proud of their school.

Staff have a very good understanding of the needs of the pupils they work with. Staff all focus on how students can work towards a future where they can be as independent as they can be, at home or in a work setting.

Pupils thrive in their personal development. They learn through real-life experiences such as: working in the school's Vestry Café in a local art gallery; working at Catcote Metro in the town centre; visiting the school's caravan at a local holiday park; or completing vocational learning at the Catcote Learning and Skills Centre. Pupils are encouraged to travel independently (where appropriate). This all leads to valuable work-related learning and opportunities for future employment.

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

Leaders have thought very carefully about what pupils should learn. Staff have high expectations of the skills, knowledge and understanding that pupils need to help them to be successful in their future adult lives. To this end, leaders have recently developed a curriculum which they feel better meets the needs of individual pupils. Leaders have worked with staff, trustees, parents, carers and pupils in developing this new curriculum. Where appropriate to pupils' needs, it is guided by the national curriculum.

Teachers plan learning opportunities using a three-tier approach to the curriculum, using the pathway which is best suited to the needs of the class group. Activities are then

planned to meet the needs of the individual pupils. Leaders are continuing to support and develop some of the curriculum planning to further improve the quality of the learning opportunities. Leaders plan carefully the courses pupils follow and the qualifications they take.

Teachers and support staff know each pupil well. Many teachers know precisely what to teach to build each individual pupil's skills and knowledge. However, leaders are developing the understanding of some teachers in how the newly created curriculum can be planned and assessed so that it best supports learning. Leaders are promoting sharing good practice throughout the school. Teachers and support staff help pupils to make progress in their learning and build their confidence. For example, staff support pupils to develop their understanding around the sequence of a story by retelling a simple story using actions, symbols and words.

The teaching of reading and communication is a priority for the school. Pupils acquire a love of reading by listening to lots of different types of stories and rhymes. Pupils successfully use signs, symbols, pictures, technology or words to communicate their thoughts and ideas. Inspectors watched pupils taking part in World Book Day activities. Pupils showed great enthusiasm for the costumes relating to different characters from books they have read. Pupils listened to extracts from stories and talked about the stories they had been reading.

Pupils enjoy school and the activities that they do. They were especially excited to talk about their experiences of performing arts in school. Staff and pupils explained that taking part in productions such as 'Aladdin' and 'The Jungle Book' has helped the pupils to strengthen resilience, develop self-confidence and explore self-expression. The students also wanted to share with inspectors their 'Lip Dub' video where the whole school had taken part in creating a music video.

Staff in the sixth form help students to feel more independent. Students have their own building, which they value as being an area which is a step away from the main school and the younger students. All students work through 'employability' pathways, developing the skills they will need in the workplace. Accreditation reflects the ability of the students. Leaders keep the qualifications students are studying under review. Where necessary, they change students' courses to better meet their needs. Teachers support students to learn skills and knowledge that will help them to be independent in the community or at work. Students spend time in school, then out of school in a range of work-related experiences.

Leaders make sure that pupils are ready for the next stage in their education. Careers guidance is of a high quality. The school is proud of the role it takes in promoting careers guidance and enterprise and employability skills. The school provides opportunities for staff to share their skills with other schools as they deliver key seminars at national conferences.

Trustees share leaders' ambition for all pupils to succeed and achieve well. They visit the school regularly and provide effective support and challenge.

Leaders are sensitive to the amount of work that staff do. Staff feel that leaders listen to them and they feel valued by the school leaders. They appreciate the importance that leaders give to their well-being.

Parents and carers appreciate the staff's hard work to support their young people. Previous students spoke with inspectors to share their very positive experiences at the school. A number of them work at the school or return to give assemblies to the younger students. They share the successes they have had as a result of their time at Catcote.

In discussion with the interim chief executive officer of the school, we agreed that continued refinement of the curriculum and the school's use of assessment may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. All appropriate checks are made on staff to establish their suitability to work with pupils. All staff and trustees are trained in safeguarding and have regular updates from school leaders. Staff know what to do if they have any concerns. Leaders are tenacious in following up concerns and working with external agencies to keep pupils free from harm. The pastoral care in the school is a strength. Staff ensure that pupils are well looked after and supported. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe at home, when out in the community and when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Trustees and leaders need to ensure that the three curriculum pathways they have created are effectively implemented in all subjects. Leaders need to ensure that curriculum plans build on pupils' past knowledge and prepare them well for the learning that is to come. It is clear from the actions that leaders have already taken that they are in the process of bringing this about.
- Leaders need to continue to develop the understanding and confidence of some staff so they can understand how to effectively deliver the new approach to the curriculum and assessment to learners across the school.
- Leaders need to continue their work ensuring that teachers evaluate the effectiveness of their planning, teaching and assessment so that strong practice can be shared across the school.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded

judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Catcote School, to be good on 19–20 March 2013.

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	139976
Local authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	10121888
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	172
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	45
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mrs Helen Gordon
Headteacher	Mrs Lisa Greig (interim chief executive officer)
Website	www.catcoteacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 March 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Catcote is a special school that caters for pupils from the age of 11 to 19 years. It provides for pupils who have a wide range of special educational needs including moderate learning difficulties; severe learning difficulties; profound and multiple learning disability; autism spectrum disorder; and social, emotional or mental health needs.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school was using no alternative provision at the time of inspection.
- There has been a change in the leadership of the school. The deputy headteacher stepped in as the interim chief executive officer (CEO) after the short illness and sad news of the loss of the headteacher in October 2019. The leaders in school have worked tirelessly to ensure that the pupils and staff in school were supported at such a difficult time.

Information about this inspection

- We held meetings with the interim CEO of the school; two assistant headteachers; the head of corporate services for the school; the careers education, information and guidance lead; the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator; middle leaders and subject coordinators; teachers; and the wider staff in school. We also spoke with the trustees and the school's leadership advisor.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: English (with a focus on communication and reading), mathematics and preparation for adulthood. For each of these subjects we met with subject coordinators, key stage leaders and teachers. We visited lessons, looked at a sample of pupils' work and met with pupils to discuss their experience of learning.
- We reviewed documents relating to safeguarding. Staff explained to us how they keep children safe.
- We met with pupils and observed pupils during social times, at lunchtime and at breaktime.
- We took account of the six responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and seven responses to the pupil survey, as well as the 39 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.

Inspection team

Catherine Garton, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Berni Moorcroft

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