

Inspection of Consett Academy

Ashdale Road, Consett, County Durham DH8 6LZ

Inspection dates: 11–12 March 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

In recent years, pupils have experienced a variable quality of education. Their progress in some areas of the curriculum has been weak. This is beginning to improve. Senior leaders are working with curriculum leaders to strengthen the curriculum. They are introducing strategies to help pupils remember important knowledge.

Leaders enrich pupils' personal development. They provide a considered programme that develops pupils' resilience and well-being. Pupils develop confidence by leading assemblies. They benefit from links with local businesses and charities. The curriculum is raising pupils' aspirations.

In lessons, the majority of pupils focus on their learning. They conduct themselves well at social times. Pupils are keen to discuss their learning and their school experiences. Adults build positive relationships with pupils.

Leaders make pupils' safety a priority. The vast majority of pupils feel safe in school. Leaders encourage and celebrate considerate behaviour. Staff take bullying seriously. They will not tolerate behaviour that undermines pupils' welfare.

Increasing numbers of parents and carers are putting their faith in the school. The number of pupils on roll has increased in Years 7 and 8. The vast majority of parents who made their views known feel that their children are happy and safe. They appreciate the actions of staff to enrich their child's education.

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

The implementation of the curriculum varies across subjects. As a result, pupils do not learn well across the whole curriculum. This is reflected in the weak progress pupils have made in some subjects. The curriculum at key stage 3 does not consistently provide pupils with the knowledge and skills they need. Gaps in pupils' subject knowledge, and subject vocabulary, persist.

Leaders are beginning to improve the curriculum. They now have a better picture of the knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn. Leaders have taken steps to address less effective teaching. Curriculum leaders are introducing new curriculum plans and lesson routines. They have worked with primary teachers to build on what pupils already know. Teachers are using a variety of strategies in lessons to help pupils to remember more over time. In subjects such as mathematics, these initiatives are helping pupils to make better progress through the curriculum. In other subjects, these approaches are less effective.

Leaders have designed an 'Aspire' curriculum that enhances pupils' personal development. They map out the experiences and personal qualities they want pupils to

gain. Pupils take on responsibilities as project leaders. They learn about the local community, their industrial heritage and the wider world. Pupils' horizons are expanded through trips to countries such as India and Poland. Pupils take part in a rich variety of clubs and activities.

Pupils behave well. Incidents of exclusion for poor behaviour have declined. The majority of pupils attend school regularly and on time. Teachers and pupils get on well together. Staff teach pupils about the importance of consideration and kindness. Leaders promote an inclusive culture where pupils value equality and difference. Pupils receive high-quality careers guidance and take part in careers fairs. Leaders make sure that pupils complete their courses. Leaders consider the needs of pupils who attend alternative education provision. They make sure that these pupils are safe.

Most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access a broad curriculum. Leaders engage with external agencies to provide additional support. Leaders provide extra support for pupils' literacy. There is still some variation in how well teachers and teaching assistants use support plans in the classroom. The majority of parents and carers who made their views known value the support that their children receive. Disadvantaged pupils access a broad curriculum. However, they do not achieve as well as their peers.

Leaders and governors consider the well-being of staff. Staff value the training they receive and the actions taken to manage their workload. Staff feel respected and well supported. Governors provide effective support and challenge. Leaders and governors engage with parents and the wider community in purposeful ways. Leaders develop fruitful links with local businesses and charities. These links increase pupils' life experiences. They also boost pupils' social confidence.

In the sixth form, students experience a curriculum that meets their needs. They receive strong provision in subjects such as psychology and sociology. The curriculum builds on students' learning at GCSE. Leaders are working to build teachers' expertise in lower performing subjects. The curriculum enriches students' personal development. They take part in work placements, business breakfasts and work with refugees. They also gain leadership responsibilities in teaching and supporting younger pupils. Students receive effective careers guidance. This enables them to progress to higher education and employment.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have built a strong safeguarding team. Safeguarding leaders and pastoral staff work together to support pupils' welfare. They have clear procedures in place to safeguard pupils. Leaders train staff well on safeguarding issues. Leaders' actions support the safety and welfare of pupils and families. They follow-up any concerns over pupils' safety and record these thoroughly. The safeguarding team works with other professionals to support pupils' welfare. Leaders teach pupils about safety through the curriculum and in assemblies. Leaders carry out thorough checks on the suitability of adults

working at the school. Governors are also well trained on safeguarding issues. They have the knowledge to assure themselves of safeguarding practice at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum at key stage 3 does not give pupils the opportunity to learn subjects in sufficient depth. In some subjects, important elements are not studied for long enough or in enough detail. This means pupils do not develop the knowledge and skills they need. Leaders should intensify actions to improve the curriculum at key stage 3. This will enable pupils to acquire greater depth of knowledge and prepare them more thoroughly for key stage 4.
- Weaknesses in the implementation of the curriculum have led to pupils making poor progress in some subjects. In some cases, teachers do not prioritise key subject knowledge or teach subject vocabulary well enough. Leaders have worked with teachers to build subject expertise. They are developing new curriculum plans and approaches. This is leading to improvements in some areas of the curriculum. Leaders need to intensify and check the impact of new curriculum plans and teaching approaches to improve pupils' achievement.

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	137638
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10121758
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1408
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	85
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Widdowson
Executive Principal	Kevin Reynolds
Website	www.consett-academy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	16–17 March 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the principal has taken on the role of executive principal, with additional responsibilities for another school in the Trust. The school now has a director of school and curriculum.
- New curriculum leaders have taken up posts in mathematics and science.
- The school provides alternative education provision for 19 pupils at the following providers: Delta, Nudge, Education Plus, Woodlands Bridge, Windlestone School PACC, Endeavour, Gateway and the LA Hospital School.
- The number of pupils on the school's roll is increasing significantly in Years 7 and 8.

Information about this inspection

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

- We held several discussions with the executive principal and senior leaders. We also talked to a wide range of staff, including newly qualified teachers, curriculum leaders and pastoral staff.
- We looked in detail into the curriculum in art, English, geography, mathematics and science. We talked to leaders and teachers about their curriculum plans. We also talked to pupils about what they knew and remembered in these subjects. We also looked at pupils' work and visited lessons.
- We talked to five members of the local governing body, including the chair of trustees, to find out how they support and challenge school leaders.
- The lead inspector talked to the education development partner from the local authority.
- We checked safeguarding arrangements. We looked at the school's work to make staff and pupils aware of safeguarding issues. We also looked at safeguarding records to see how concerns over pupils' safety are recorded and followed up. We also looked at the checks made on the suitability of staff working at the school.
- An inspector visited pupils attending one of the alternative education providers used by the school.
- We talked to a wide range of pupils to gather their views on school life.

Inspection team

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