

Inspection of a good school: High Tunstall College of Science

Elwick Road, West Park, Hartlepool, TS26 0LQ

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 July 2021

Outcome

High Tunstall College of Science continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their new school building. They are starting to get to know the building better. Pupils had to stay in one classroom until quite recently because of COVID-19 (coronavirus) safety rules. Now pupils can move around more. Most members of staff and pupils feel that the move to the new building improved behaviour and attitudes. The site is calm and orderly. The staff provide a high level of supervision. Pupils are safe and well cared for.

Pupils feel that their heads of year and school support officers are readily available and supportive. They trust them to sort out any bullying that might happen. Pupils are confident that adults will help them if they have worries or concerns.

Pupils think that the school has got better in recent years. They find the lessons interesting. They like having lots of useful resources to help them learn new topics. Most pupils found that they could continue to learn from home when the schools were only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Some extra-curricular activities and social events are starting to resume. A strong sense of community is returning. The staff are working hard to get to know pupils after the interruptions caused by the pandemic. During this inspection, pupils really enjoyed the camaraderie and competition of sports day. Everyone was involved and clearly benefited from the well-organised and enjoyable events.

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

Leaders have a well-considered vision for the curriculum. They ensure the curriculum caters for pupils' academic and personal development. Pupils receive teaching in a broad range of subjects in key stage 3. Curriculum planning in each subject includes all of the knowledge set out in the national curriculum. Leaders only offer qualifications that genuinely benefit the pupils. There is a broad range of option choices available in key

stage 4, including courses for pupils who are more vocationally minded. A broadly average proportion of pupils are studying the English Baccalaureate in key stage 4. The teaching of personal, social and health education (PSHE) and of careers education is firmly embedded within the timetable. Leaders have well-developed systems to check on the impact the curriculum is having. However, the disruption caused by the pandemic has meant that some of their checks have not taken place as expected. A more comprehensive series of checks on the curriculum are planned from September 2021 onwards.

There are detailed curriculum plans in place for each subject. 'Learning journeys' show the sequence in which knowledge is to be taught. Curriculum leaders have identified the 'golden nuggets' of knowledge that teachers need to emphasize the most. Teachers employ sensible strategies to revisit this knowledge regularly so that pupils can remember it. Consequently, pupils can recall lots of detail and use accurate vocabulary when talking about subjects they have studied. Many pupils are developing the depth of knowledge needed to be able to write at length.

Around 60% of pupils enter the school in Year 7 with reading skills below those expected for their age. The school has some useful programmes in place to support a culture of reading. However, some pupils are not catching up as quickly as they need to. This is because members of staff have not had the specific training needed to help these pupils.

The support provided for pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities is effective. These pupils study the same curriculum as everyone else. In mainstream lessons, teachers make the adjustments that pupils need. They break activities down into smaller steps. Within the additionally resourced provision, a high staffing ratio means teachers and support staff give lots of one-to-one support. They adapt the curriculum thoughtfully. For example, pupils study an adapted version of George Orwell's 'Animal Farm'. This allows them to learn about Orwell's ideas through the vocabulary they have already learned. The Shine Centre is helping to keep pupils at risk of exclusion engaged with learning. Leaders are strongly committed to meeting the needs of these pupils. When exclusion is used, it is used as a last resort. However, sometimes pupils are not reintegrated back into school after an exclusion fast enough.

Leaders ensure the curriculum goes well beyond the academic. The PSHE curriculum is wide-ranging. It includes statutory content about relationships, health and sex. These lessons also teach pupils about how to stay safe, online safety and the value of the law, mutual respect and tolerance. Pupils are also taught about good study skills. Teachers deliver this content in a plain-talking manner. They give space for pupils to ask questions. The lessons are supplemented by sessions in tutorial time and through assemblies. Some clubs and sports activities have started up again. Together, these opportunities are ensuring there is wide-ranging provision for pupils' personal development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a culture of vigilance. Members of staff did lots of additional safeguarding training during the period when schools were only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions. Consequently, they understand a wide range of potential risks, including county lines, domestic violence and extremism. The staff made weekly telephone calls to every pupil during the national lockdown to check on their safety and welfare.

Leaders take prompt and appropriate steps to protect pupils at risk of harm. They work closely with external agencies. They keep detailed records of the actions they take. Leaders make sure they complete all statutory vetting checks on adults who work in or visit the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Last year, over half of pupils who entered the school in Year 7 did not have the reading skills they should have for their age. The school's catch-up programmes are working well for many pupils. However, some pupils are not getting the specific help they need to catch up quickly. Leaders should ensure they provide specialist training, including the teaching of phonics, for the staff who support weaker readers.
- Following exclusion, some pupils in the Shine Centre have not been reintegrated quickly enough. This has led to some learning time being lost. Leaders must ensure that any staged reintegration to the Shine Centre following an exclusion happens more swiftly and is time limited.
- During the pandemic, COVID-19 safety procedures have meant that leaders' checks on the curriculum have not been as comprehensive as planned. This means that leaders do not have the full picture about how well the curriculum is working. Leaders should ensure their planned programme of checks is delivered in full across the next year.

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 outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good school could now be better than good, or that 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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 23 and 24 June 2016.

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 [here](#).

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	111748
Local authority	Hartlepool Borough
Inspection number	10199102
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1256
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Timothy Blades
Headteacher	Mark Tilling
Website	http://www.htcs.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	23 – 24 June 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school moved into a purpose-built new building in October 2019.
- Since the last inspection, the senior leadership team has been restructured. The previous chair of the governing body stepped down in 2019.
- The school has additionally resourced provision for up to 20 pupils with autism spectrum disorder and medical and physical disabilities. The school also has the Shine Centre, a second additionally resourced provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health issues.
- Currently, there are two pupils attending alternative education providers. One pupil attends The Horizon School pupil referral unit and the second attends Belle Vue Community and Sports Centre.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, groups of teachers, other adults who work in the school and groups of pupils. Meetings were also held with

the chair and other members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the school improvement partner.

- The inspection focused in particular on the quality of the curriculum in mathematics, history and PSHE. Inspectors met the leaders for each subject, looked in detail at curriculum planning, scrutinised a sample of pupils' workbooks, and held discussions with subject teachers and pupils. During this inspection, the school had suspended its normal timetable to hold a full day of PSHE teaching and the annual sports day.
- An inspector met the special educational needs coordinator. He looked at several support plans and visited the Shine Centre to see how well support was being delivered.
- Inspectors walked around the school at different times of the day to check on punctuality, behaviour and conduct. Where possible, inspectors held informal discussions with pupils. Inspectors spoke to different members of staff, including support and administrative staff to gauge their views on pupils' behaviour and conduct.
- Inspectors looked at the vetting checks the school makes on adults who work in the school. An inspector talked to senior leaders responsible for safeguarding and looked at records of the actions they have taken to protect pupils at risk. Inspectors spoke to pupils to gauge how safe they felt and to what extent they know how to keep themselves safe. Inspectors also checked whether members of staff understand and abide by the school's safeguarding policy.
- The inspection team considered the 57 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and looked at the 42 responses to the staff survey and the 60 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

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