

Inspection of Berwick Academy

Adams Drive, Spittal, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland, TD15 2JF

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 October 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

Berwick Academy is an improving school. Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and priorities. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are high. The quality of education has improved and the curriculum is ambitious for all pupils. Effective teaching is helping many pupils to grow in confidence and achieve well. However, some teachers do not use assessment well enough to check that pupils are ready to move on in their learning. This means that some pupils do not learn the curriculum as well as they should.

Pupils understand the importance of 'The Berwick Way'; being 'on time, on task and on side'. They know that this approach to school life will be just as important when they leave school. Pupils know that bullying will not be tolerated by leaders. Most pupils are respectful and courteous. They feel safe in school. That said, the poor behaviour of a minority of pupils interrupts some lessons.

Pupils talk enthusiastically about the school's new library. There is excitement among those who are undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Year 11 pupils studying physical education (PE) appreciate the opportunities to get involved in sports leadership courses. However, pupils do not have a wide range of opportunities to experience and learn about different cultures and faiths.

There are strong relationships between teachers and students in the sixth form. Bespoke curriculums help students who might otherwise struggle to stay on in education. Students are well supported to make choices for their next steps in education, employment and training.

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

Increased stability in senior leadership has helped to improve the school. The headteacher and senior team ensure that the right action is taken in the right order to address key priorities. Senior leaders know what still needs to improve and have an accurate overview of the school's performance. Most staff feel well supported with their well-being and workload. They value the professional development that they receive to improve their teaching. Some areas of leadership require further development. Some leaders do not accurately monitor the quality of education in the subjects for which they have responsibility. They are not addressing some important inconsistencies in how well the curriculum is implemented.

Leaders have strengthened the school's curriculum. There is high ambition for all pupils. Curriculum plans identify and carefully sequence the knowledge that pupils should learn. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works closely with subject leaders. Together they adapt the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) so that they can access the same learning as their peers.

Teachers give pupils opportunities to recap content that they have previously studied. This is helping them to remember important content. Teaching assistants provide effective in-class support to pupils with SEND. Some teachers check pupils' understanding before moving on to new content. However, some teachers do not use assessment well. In some cases, including in the sixth form, pupils move on to new subject content before they are ready. This means that gaps in their learning and understanding are not addressed well. This limits the progress that they make in learning the curriculum over time.

Reading is high on leaders' agenda and there has been significant investment in supporting pupils to read well. The new library gives pupils wider access to high-quality texts. Regular support is provided for the small number of pupils who need support with learning to read. However, this support is not targeted as well as it could be in helping pupils to rapidly develop the phonic knowledge they need in order to read well enough to access the full curriculum.

Behaviour has improved since the previous inspection. Suspensions have fallen. Fewer pupils spend time out of lessons because of poor behaviour. However, low-level disruption still occurs in some lessons. Some teachers do not consistently apply the school's behaviour policy. This confuses pupils and means that poor behaviour gets in the way of learning.

Leaders have improved the school's personal development offer. Sports clubs have recently restarted. Leaders ensure that pupils develop their understanding of what it is to be a responsible citizen. Careers education is a strength. The school meets the requirements of the Baker clause, which requires schools to provide students in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships. Local employers are regularly in school. Pupils understand how expectations in school match expectations in the workplace. Pupils also understand the importance of tolerance and mutual respect. Sixth-form students spoke eloquently about LGBT rights. However, pupils do not have access to enough opportunities to learn about different cultures and faiths.

There is high ambition for post-16 students. The school has broadened the range of subjects on offer. There is a close-knit community of students in the sixth form. They are enthusiastic about their learning and well prepared for their next steps. A very high proportion of students progress to their first-choice destination. Leaders have established effective partnerships with alternative providers for those students who need support. Together, they provide personalised curriculums for students who might otherwise not stay in education.

Trustees have clear oversight of the school. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. The board of trustees has the skills and expertise to effectively hold leaders to account. Trustees offer considerable challenge to leaders when it is required. For example, they carefully scrutinise decisions to exclude pupils from school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in school. Staff know that safeguarding is their responsibility. They know what signs might indicate that a pupil may be at risk of harm and how to report their concerns. Staff responsible for safeguarding liaise effectively with outside agencies to seek help for pupils and keep detailed records of their actions. Safeguarding leaders use time in morning registration to raise pupils' awareness of the contextual risks that they may face outside school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some leaders do not accurately check the quality of the curriculum. They have not ensured that the curriculum is consistently well implemented in some subjects. Leaders should take action to strengthen leadership of some faculties so that the quality of education continues to improve.
- Teachers do not consistently make good use of assessment to inform their teaching. This means that at times pupils are moved on too quickly in their learning and do not have a secure understanding of the curriculum content. Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment effectively and consistently, including in the sixth form, to ensure that pupils know and remember more of the curriculum.
- Some teachers are not consistently applying the school's behaviour policy. As a result, low-level disruption in some classrooms has a negative impact on pupils' learning. Leaders should ensure that the behaviour policy is implemented so that pupils demonstrate consistently good behaviour in all lessons.
- Pupils do not have access to a wide range of opportunities to broaden their cultural horizons. As a result, pupils do not have a secure knowledge of other faiths and cultures. Leaders should develop the curriculum to ensure that it helps pupils to better understand and appreciate different groups of people that make up modern Britain.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	137598
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10200669
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	13 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	520
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	96
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Donna Goddard
Headteacher	Tracy Hush
Website	http://www.berwickacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- A very small number of pupils, including some students in the sixth form, attend unregistered alternative provision. This is delivered by three providers; Engage, Oak Training and the Berwick Youth Project.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other members of the senior team, directors of learning, subject leaders and the SENCo. Inspectors also held meetings with leaders responsible for attendance, behaviour, sixth-form provision, careers, personal development and reading.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, design technology, PE and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work. Inspectors also visited lessons in a range of other subjects such as mathematics, science and music. This included visiting sixth-form lessons.
- Inspectors spoke with teachers, including early career teachers, support staff, pupils and students in the sixth form. Inspectors also listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- An inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and deputy designated safeguarding lead. The single central record was scrutinised as well as the school's safeguarding records.
- Meetings were held with the chair of the board of trustees and two trustees. An inspector spoke on the telephone to the school's improvement partner.
- A range of school documents were reviewed, including the school's self-evaluation and the school improvement plan.
- An inspector visited the Berwick Youth Project and spoke to pupils attending this alternative provision. An inspector also spoke on the telephone to other alternative providers.
- Inspectors considered the views given in Ofsted's online questionnaires by 35 pupils and 46 members of staff. The 58 responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey were also considered, including 41 free-text responses. Inspectors also considered one letter from a member of staff.

Inspection team

Graham Findlay, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Moira Banks

Ofsted Inspector

Bernard Clark

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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