

# Inspection of a good school: Gurney Pease Academy

Dodsworth Street, Darlington, County Durham DL1 2NG

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Inspection dates:

19 and 20 October 2021

## Outcome

Gurney Pease Academy continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Valuing each child as an individual is at the heart of this inclusive and welcoming school. Leaders are highly ambitious for pupils and what they can achieve. This ambition is embodied in the school values: perseverance, respect, independence, drive and enjoyment (PRIDE). These values are regularly celebrated in school and contribute towards pupils' personal growth.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are provided with a rich variety of experiences that extend beyond the classroom. Pupils talk about the range of opportunities that exist for them, including visits and visitors coming into the school. There are opportunities for them to participate in activities off site, such as 'Wilderness Schooling' and residential visits. These experiences enable pupils to develop confidence, resilience and strength of character.

Adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Around the school pupils behave well. Their learning is very rarely disrupted. Pupils are polite, friendly and respectful to adults. They know and understand the school rules. Pupils speak confidently about how to treat one another with tolerance and respect.

Pupils understand different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying. They say that bullying incidents are rare. When pupils do have disagreements, they are confident that adults are on hand to sort things out and keep them safe.

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

Reading is taught well and is a strength of the school. This is because adults are well trained. Leaders aim to foster a lifelong love of reading. They have ensured its continued development is an ongoing priority. Leaders are determined every child will learn to read. This starts as soon as children start school. In Nursery, children are surrounded by a language-rich environment. They join in with stories, songs and rhymes. Books are taken home to share with an adult. This helps to develop children's vocabulary. Children learn

phonics as soon as they start in reception class. Phonics is taught daily. Leaders have clear expectations of the sounds to be taught and when they should be taught by. Pupils who are not keeping up with the pace of the phonics programme are provided with extra lessons. This enables them to catch up quickly. The books pupils take home to read match the sounds they have learned. This helps them to develop fluency and confidence in their reading. Teachers read to pupils every day. Books are chosen with a particular purpose in mind. For example, they are chosen to spark pupils' interest and support their learning in the wider curriculum.

The mathematics curriculum is well planned. Leaders have ensured that there is a consistent approach to the teaching of key mathematical concepts. This starts in the early years, where children are exposed to number as soon as they start school. There are opportunities for them to count and recognise numbers as well as ordering objects by size. The sequencing of the curriculum is clear and logical. There are varied opportunities for pupils to revisit their learning. In lessons, they regularly practise important curriculum content. This helps to embed the crucial knowledge, skills and concepts that pupils need to take with them to the next year group. Work in books shows that pupils have pride in their work.

Staff support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. There are clear systems in place to help early identification. Teachers adapt their plans to ensure that pupils with SEND can access the same curriculum as their peers. The school also provides effective emotional support to pupils. There are opportunities for pupils to take part in a variety of nurture activities. These include sand and Lego therapies.

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum for pupils to learn. In most subjects, plans set out the key knowledge and skills to be taught and by when. This helps to develop pupils' learning over time. However, not all subjects are as far along in this journey. In some subjects, such as art and design, the curriculum is not yet clearly thought out. This means that pupils are not well equipped to draw on prior learning and know more and remember more.

Pupils are keen to share their learning in the wider curriculum. They talk about opportunities to develop responsibility and independence. For example, they can apply to be elected school councillor or head boy and girl. They know how to eat healthily and maintain an active lifestyle. Pupils understand the importance of looking after their physical and mental well-being. Observations of pupils' learning in class demonstrates that they show a willingness to keep trying and to do their best.

Staff appreciate leaders' attempts to support their workload and well-being. As a result, staff morale is high. They are overwhelmingly supportive of school leaders.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is given the utmost priority. Leaders have ensured that all staff are well trained in important safeguarding issues. Staff understand the procedures to follow should they have any concerns. Leaders follow up any concerns swiftly. They work well with other agencies to support pupils and their families. Leaders ensure that appropriate checks are undertaken when employing staff new to the school.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe off and online. They are aware of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. For example, the local police force visits the school to teach the pupils how to keep safe outside school and in the local community.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The school's curriculum is not yet sufficiently planned and sequenced in all subjects. However, it is clear from leaders' actions that they are in the process of bringing this about. In some subjects, for example art and design, plans do not enable pupils to build on what they remember or have learned in the past. Learning is not sequenced in enough detail to ensure pupils learn the most important content in a logical way. Leaders need to identify the crucial knowledge, skills and vocabulary pupils should learn in each subject and ensure that teachers use assessment well to check that pupils remember what they have been taught.

## **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, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 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 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138362
<b>Local authority</b>	Darlington
<b>Inspection number</b>	10200388
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	207
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Jenny Gregg
<b>Principal</b>	Alison Sinclair
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.educationvillage.org.uk/">www.educationvillage.org.uk/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	3 December 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of The Education Village Academy Trust.
- The school offers pre-school provision for two-year-olds.
- The school currently uses the following alternative provider: Clifton House. This provision is registered under Rise Carr College.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the principal, other senior leaders, subject leaders and groups of staff. The inspector also met with representatives from the governing body and the chief executive officer of The Education Village Academy Trust. The inspector discussed with them the quality of education provided by the school, the pupils' wider development, pupils' behaviour and staff workload.
- The inspector listened to pupils from Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.

- The inspector did deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art and design. This involved meeting with senior and curriculum leaders, scrutinising curriculum planning and visiting lessons where pupils were learning these subjects. The inspector talked to pupils in lessons and met with them to look at their work. The inspector also met with teachers to discuss the curriculum they were delivering.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school, including lunchtime. The inspector also met with groups of pupils to discuss their views of the school.
- In order to judge the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector read the relevant school policies, scrutinised the single central record, checked the school's procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and interviewed the designated safeguarding lead. The inspector also met with school staff to check their understanding of safeguarding and the safeguarding training they have received. Additionally, the inspector met with governors to check their understanding of their statutory responsibilities to keep pupils safe.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's parent survey, Parent View, including the 28 free-text responses, and 23 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the online pupil survey.

## **Inspection team**

Gill Wild, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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