

Inspection of a good school: The Grangefield Academy

Oxbridge Avenue, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 4LE

Inspection dates:

1 and 2 December 2021

Outcome

The Grangefield Academy continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if the inspectors were to carry out a section 5 inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The trust motto is 'Outcomes Focused, Child Centred', and pupils' well-being is definitely at the heart of this school. Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils rise to meet these. Every Thursday, pupils eagerly line up at lunchtime to show staff the work that they are proud of. There is a culture of aspiration and celebration. Staff encourage all pupils to do their best and do not accept excuses.

Pupils explained that staff care about them and want them to do well. Strong relationships between staff and pupils are obvious. Leaders' commitment to pupils continues even after they leave school. Leaders regularly check in with any pupils who have left Year 11 without a secure plan for their future.

All pupils spoken to said they felt safe in school. Behaviour around the school is calm and pupils are respectful. Pupils feel that if bullying happens, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. All staff who responded to the Ofsted survey agree that bullying, while rare, is taken seriously. In classrooms, pupils are engaged and eager to learn. They frequently celebrate each other's success with applause. This is an inclusive community, in which pupils flourish.

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

Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on the school's roll has increased significantly. This expansion has been well managed by leaders and no pupil is left behind.

There is a keen focus on outcomes for pupils, which extends beyond examination results. All pupils enjoy a broad and ambitious curriculum. In classrooms, teachers follow rigorous routines that help pupils to remember more. They regularly check what pupils know and

address any gaps in pupils' learning. Teachers use 'live marking' and 'pink pen' systems so that pupils understand exactly how to improve their work.

Leaders' focus on reading is a considerable strength of the school. They quickly identify struggling readers and put effective, daily support in place for them. Staff reinforce the importance of reading through all aspects of school life. Pupils are given reward tokens to use in a book vending machine. The 'reading routes' programme gives pupils access to free books from a wide range of genres. The programme supports them to broaden their reading habits and develop their reading stamina. Staff explicitly teach pupils how to read challenging informational texts in lessons.

Leaders, who are new in post, ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported to achieve highly. Staff benefit from regular training in how to best support pupils with SEND. Staff ensure that these pupils are able to learn and remember the curriculum effectively. Leaders check this provision regularly. Pupils with SEND are well prepared for their next steps. They attend assisted college visits, accompanied by staff, to ensure they get the most out of their experience.

During lessons, staff do not tolerate low-level disruption. There is a purposeful atmosphere in classrooms. Pupils are keen to do well. Staff report being well supported by leaders in managing pupils' behaviour. Leaders maintain a high presence around school. One member of staff explained that support from leaders ensured that the 'focus in lessons is learning and not behaviour'.

Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for life beyond school. They carefully plan how pupils will learn important messages around tolerance, respect and diversity. Leaders ensure that 'life' lessons enjoy the same status as other curriculum subjects. Staff access training to ensure they are confident in delivering sensitive topics. Leaders do not shy away from difficult topics. Pupils learn about sexual harassment and healthy relationships in an age-appropriate way. Staff promote discussions around mental health and ensure that pupils understand how and when to seek support. Leaders also ensure that pupils receive meaningful messages around careers, from Year 7 through to Year 11. Pupils access a wide range of experiences with employers and receive personalised careers guidance.

Staff feel that leaders consider their workload and well-being. They agree that trust-wide systems for marking and planning have been especially beneficial in reducing workload. One member of staff commented, 'Leaders are always thinking about staff welfare.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have strong systems in place to make sure that pupils are safe. They ensure that all staff know what signs to look out for that show that pupils might be at risk. Staff understand how to report concerns in a timely manner. Leaders are tenacious in securing external support when it is needed. Leaders are meticulous in tracking vulnerable pupils. Robust systems are in place for recruitment of staff.

All pupils spoken to emphatically felt safe in school. Parents and staff agree. Pupils know how to report concerns and value the support of learning managers. Pupils are well taught about how to keep themselves safe from risk, including online.

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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in December 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

Unique reference number	139673
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10200427
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	942
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Sanders
Principal	Kate Wright
Website	https://tga.northerneducationtrust.org/
Dates of previous inspection	30 November and 1 December 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has significantly increased in size since the previous inspection.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers for a small number of pupils. These are LA Endeavour Unit and Ace, based in Dyke House.

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 school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: history, art and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with a wide range of senior leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator. An inspector met with the chief executive officer of the trust. An inspector also spoke with the chair of the governing body by telephone.

- Inspectors looked at information around behaviour, attendance and wider enrichment opportunities.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including self-evaluation documents, minutes of governance meetings, safeguarding documents and individual learning plans for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors also spoke with pupils who had received sanctions in the past.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff around workload and leadership.
- An inspector talked to the leader in charge of safeguarding arrangements. They met with a range of staff and pupils to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures. They checked logs of actions that school has taken to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors considered the 104 responses to Ofsted Parent View, the 43 responses to the staff survey and the 101 responses to the pupil survey. They also considered additional communications from parents.

Inspection team

Katherine Spurr, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Toni Spours

Ofsted Inspector

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