

# Inspection of Ashington Academy

Green Lane, Ashington, Northumberland NE63 8DH

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Inspection dates: 23 and 24 March 2022

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Leaders and wider staff have worked hard to address weaknesses so that pupils now receive a good quality of education. This includes those students who attend the sixth form. Most pupils would recommend the school to a friend. They recognise the positive changes that have happened over time. Staff enjoy working at this school. They are proud of the changes they now see.

Pupils are well supported by teachers who have high expectations of them. Pupils say that teachers are kind and will always help them. They speak highly of the pastoral support staff, including the year group leaders. There are strong systems of support in place for those who need them.

Pupils behave well in the majority of lessons, and at other times of the day. Little learning time is lost. Bullying does happen occasionally. Pupils know how to report concerns. Most say that adults would help them with anything that they were worried about.

Leaders have placed a strong emphasis on broadening pupils' knowledge and use of vocabulary. This continues in the sixth form, where students are encouraged to read widely. Many pupils make use of the wider curriculum activities to develop their talents and interests. Pupils tell leaders what clubs they would like. As a result, there is now a well-being club for pupils. However, leaders have not ensured that there is a well-planned programme of careers information, education, advice and guidance to support pupils in their next steps.

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

Leaders have made significant improvements to the curriculum. They have identified the important knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember. Curriculum planning sets out the prior knowledge that pupils need to understand so that they can make sense of new concepts. This enables teachers to plan sequences of learning that link to what pupils have learned before.

In most subjects, teachers carefully check that pupils have learned the important knowledge set out in the curriculum. There are regular opportunities for pupils to revisit key learning. Where this happens consistently, pupils are more able to remember what they have learned. However, teachers do not consistently check that pupils have learned the content covered in the personal development programme. Some pupils do not have a strong knowledge of different faiths and beliefs.

Teachers know which pupils in their class need additional help with their learning. Adults use the strategies that are set out in support plans to help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Typically, this enables those pupils to access the same curriculum as others in their class. However, some pupils with SEND have previous gaps in their knowledge and understanding which are not

precisely identified by some teachers. As a result, some pupils with SEND struggle to access and understand new learning.

Pupils at the earliest stages of learning to read are identified on entry to the school. These pupils receive effective support from trained staff. As a result, they quickly learn to read. Ongoing support further develops pupils' fluency and comprehension of different texts. The focus on developing a love of reading is evident throughout the school. Pupils and students in sixth form are encouraged to read widely.

All staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. In most lessons, pupils behave well and engage with their learning. There are clear, well-established routines. There are lots of staff around to help pupils and intervene when a few pupils do not behave well. This is reassuring to most pupils. However, a small number of pupils sometimes hear unkind comments from others, and they are reluctant to report this to adults. Others are worried about bullying, although this is increasingly rare.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They value the ongoing training that leaders have arranged for them. Those teachers at the earliest stages of their career are well supported. They say they feel that the school community is 'like a family'. Staff more widely agree. They speak positively about the changes that leaders have brought about.

Leaders are rightly proud of the increasingly ambitious next steps that many pupils and students take after leaving school. Pupils in Year 11 receive effective support to help them select the right courses in the school's own sixth form. However, there is not a strong, strategic approach to ensuring effective careers provision for all pupils. A number of pupils do not receive timely and well-planned information and support about careers and apprenticeships. Some pupils and their parents are understandably concerned about this.

Governors understand their strategic role. They challenge school leaders effectively and check that the actions being taken to improve the school are having the desired impact. There are close links between governors and the wider trust. Together, they ensure that there are effective systems in place for further improvement.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders regularly check that all staff have a strong knowledge of effective safeguarding. There are regular training updates and briefings to ensure that all staff are kept up to date. Staff are aware of the local safeguarding concerns. They know the signs that suggest a pupil may be at risk of harm. Staff know who they should report any concerns to. There are strong systems in place to keep pupils safe. Leaders make timely referrals to wider safeguarding partners. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including online.

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

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

- Teachers do not consistently identify where there are gaps in prior knowledge for pupils with SEND. As a result, some pupils with SEND struggle to learn new content. Leaders should ensure that there are clear strategies to check that these pupils learn the important knowledge they need to make progress.
- Leaders have not ensured that there is a strong, strategic approach to developing pupils' knowledge of different careers and other education and training opportunities. This means that many pupils do not receive sufficient information early enough to raise their aspirations and to help them make informed choices about their next steps. Leaders should ensure that there is a considered approach to ensuring that all pupils benefit from a well-planned careers programme.
- Leaders do not check that pupils have learned the important information within the personal, social, health and economic education curriculum. As a result, they have not identified that some pupils cannot recall information about topics such as the protected characteristics. Leaders should ensure that there are clear systems in place to check that pupils have learned the important knowledge that leaders have identified in order to support their personal development.

## 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>	144601
<b>Local authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	10212320
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	971
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	90
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Maggie Saxton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Yvonne Weston
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.ashingtonacademy.co.uk">www.ashingtonacademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- This is the first inspection since the predecessor school, Ashington High School, joined the North East Learning Trust (NELT).
- Since joining NELT, there have been new appointments to the senior leadership team. These include the appointment of a new headteacher, a second deputy headteacher and an additional assistant headteacher.
- The school uses the alternative provider, the Northumberland pupil referral unit.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

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

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. They have taken this into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with senior leaders, including the chief executive officer of the trust, trustees, and representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors met with leaders for behaviour and attendance, sixth form and careers, pastoral leaders and wider support staff. Inspectors spoke with teachers at the early stages of their teaching career.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science and geography. They met with subject leaders to discuss their curriculum planning. Inspectors talked with pupils about what they had learned in these lessons. Inspectors visited lessons, talked with teachers and looked at pupils' work. Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding records. They spoke with staff about how they keep children safe.
- The views of parents were considered through the responses to Ofsted's parents' survey and through telephone conversations held with four parents. The views of pupils were considered through responses to Ofsted's pupils' survey, as well as through meetings held with pupils.
- The views of staff were considered from meetings held with staff and from the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.

## Inspection team

Eleanor Belfield, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Joanne Owens	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Gammack	Ofsted Inspector
Christina Jones	Ofsted Inspector

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