

Inspection of Bedlington Academy

Palace Road, Bedlington, Northumberland NE22 7DS

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2022

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

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a calm, purposeful and happy school. Pupils and adults interact warmly. Pupils know that adults care about them and feel confident that they can report any concerns or worries. Behaviour routines and systems are simple and well understood by pupils. Teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils strive to meet these expectations both in lessons and around the school site.

Leaders have created a culture of respect. Use of discriminatory language is rare. Pupils report it to adults when they hear it. Leaders act quickly to ensure that any bullying or discrimination is dealt with. As a result, pupils feel safe. One pupil told inspectors that most pupils 'just get along'. Inspectors agree. This is a school with a strong sense of community.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and enjoy the wide range of clubs that they can attend. Fishing club is a particular favourite. Pupils in the sixth form gain leadership experience by joining the 'student executive' and working with school leaders on issues such as support for pupils' mental health. In some cases, sixth-form pupils act as reading mentors for younger pupils. The prefect system in the main school gives pupils a voice in decisions that affect them. For example, pupils were consulted about the recent changes to uniform. It is worn with pride by most pupils.

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

Leaders at all levels share a clear strategic vision. The development of a broad curriculum has been a particularly successful aspect of this vision. Modern foreign languages are growing in popularity. Drama is now studied by all pupils in Years 7 to 9. The number of pupils studying music in key stage 4 and in the sixth form is growing. This is because leaders value the cultural development of pupils and have made these subjects integral to the curriculum. Leaders' actions are ensuring that more and more pupils study the English Baccalaureate in Years 10 and 11.

Curriculum planning takes account of what pupils have learned at primary school and what they will go on to do after leaving Bedlington Academy. This helps subject leaders to prioritise the most important knowledge that pupils need. Subject leaders work together so that pupils experience consistency. In science and mathematics, for example, subject leaders ensure that teachers use the same approaches to teaching mathematical formulae in both subjects.

In lessons, teachers remind pupils of the important vocabulary that they need to learn. This develops in sophistication as pupils move from Year 7 to Year 13. Pupils make links between subjects. For example, between the blues music they study in music and the topics on slavery studied in history. Teachers use assessment strategies consistently to help pupils remember what they have learned. There is a gentle persistence to teachers' questioning of pupils. This helps pupils to develop and deepen their thinking and means teachers know what pupils have learned.

Leaders place great importance on Bedlington Academy being an inclusive school. For example, leaders provide teachers with clear information about pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers use this information to ensure they adapt the curriculum appropriately. All pupils have access to the same broad curriculum. In written work, pupils show understanding of the most important information teachers want them to remember. When discussing learning with inspectors, some pupils lacked confidence to talk about what they have learned. Some pupils struggle to remember the most important information that teachers want them to know.

Leaders ensure that reading is a central part of the school curriculum. Teachers read with pupils in form time. Curriculum plans ensure pupils access high-quality texts. Some staff are trained in the teaching of phonics. Those pupils at the early stages of reading receive regular support which is well targeted. This helps pupils to become confident readers.

Behaviour is well managed by adults. Pupils respect the school environment because the systems adopted by school leaders encourage this. There is very little litter. The 'student hub' used by sixth-form pupils has a professional atmosphere. Assemblies and personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons make it clear who pupils can speak to if they have concerns or worries. This gives pupils confidence that adults will help them.

Leaders have prioritised the development of pupils' cultural experiences. In English, for example, pupils study literature from different time periods and cultures. Geography leaders use field trips to develop both geographical and cultural knowledge. Local universities and employers visit to speak to pupils. This is helping to broaden pupils' horizons. In PSHE, pupils receive clear guidance about careers. However, subject curriculums do not provide information to pupils about career opportunities related to specific subjects.

Staff understand leaders' vision for an inclusive school. They receive training linked to curriculum goals. This builds staff's confidence. Governors check on the impact of leaders' strategies. Everyone understands and works towards the same goals as a result of these actions. Almost all staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey feel proud to work at Bedlington Academy.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Record-keeping is thorough and clear. Leaders navigate school systems efficiently to ensure they use information to effectively safeguard children. Leadership of safeguarding is distributed widely across the school. Pupils have confidence in reporting concerns to adults and action is swift to help pupils receive the support they need.

Staff receive regular training and updates. Leaders ensure staff have a good understanding of local issues related to safeguarding. Staff are confident about the steps they will take if children make a disclosure. They are aware of the signs that may indicate a child is vulnerable.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils do not recall some subject-specific terms and concepts clearly. This means they do not progress through the planned curriculum as rapidly as they might. Leaders should ensure that pupils are given regular chances to talk about what they have learned in order to develop fluency and confidence when recalling learning.
- Careers guidance and information is not woven through subject curriculums. This means that some pupils are not aware of the breadth of opportunities available to them after they leave Bedlington Academy. Leaders should ensure that meaningful careers information is woven through all aspects of the school curriculum.

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.

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	144977
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10227786
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	811
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	67
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Margaret Saxton
Headteacher	Joanna Lamb
Website	www.bedlingtonacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is the first inspection since the predecessor school, Bedlingtonshire Community High School, joined the North East Learning Trust (NELT).
- Since joining NELT, there has been considerable change in senior leadership at the school, including a new headteacher. There is also new leadership in many subjects and in the behaviour management team.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Year 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke to the headteacher and other senior leaders. They also met with the chair of the local governing council and the vice chair of trustees. Inspectors also spoke with chief executive officer of NELT.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, geography, science and music. They met with subject leaders to discuss 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 and looked at plans to support those at the early stages of reading.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum planning for drama and design and technology and spoke to leaders in these subjects. Inspectors visited lessons in drama and mathematics and spoke to the leader for mathematics.
- Inspectors met with leaders for behaviour and attendance, sixth form, PSHE and careers, and spoke with wider support staff.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator and scrutinised the information teachers receive about pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders with responsibility for safeguarding and scrutinised safeguarding records. They spoke with staff about how they keep children safe.
- Inspectors observed social times and visited spaces allocated to sixth-form pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils, including sixth-form pupils, both formally and informally, including single-sex groups of pupils.
- The views of parents, staff and pupils were considered through surveys, including Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Matthew Vellensworth, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Barry Reed	Ofsted Inspector
Bernard Senier	Ofsted Inspector
Kate Morris	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
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