

Inspection of a good school: Ferryhill School

Merrington Road, Ferryhill, County Durham DL17 8RW

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 September 2022

Outcome

Ferryhill School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Ferryhill School plays an important role in this community. Leaders have high aspirations for all pupils. The 'Adventures' programme makes sure that pupils have access to exciting experiences, including a range of international travel. Many of the experiences are funded so that any pupil can take advantage of these opportunities. Pupils are encouraged to bid for funding to complete their own enterprise projects. Leaders are passionate about providing pupils with life experiences as well as a high-quality education.

A number of pupils join Ferryhill School at different points during the school year. They join a positive and respectful community. Leaders ensure that these pupils are welcomed and helped to settle. Pupils who have joined from other schools thrive here. They believe that teachers listen to them and value their opinions.

Pupils do not feel that bullying is a problem at this school. Pupils feel that they receive clear messages about how to treat other people. If bullying occurs, teachers take this very seriously. They act quickly to make sure it stops.

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

Leaders have recently focused on developing the curriculum. They have ensured that the content that they teach is ambitious. Some leaders have considered very carefully exactly what pupils need to know. In these stronger subjects, the planning helps pupils to build on their knowledge step by step. They can link new learning to what they already know. In some other subject areas, this mapping out of important knowledge is not as precise.

Teachers use 'flashback' tasks to help pupils remember what they have learned. Most teachers use questioning effectively to uncover gaps in pupils' understanding. In some lessons, pupils are also encouraged to rehearse their answers with partners before sharing their ideas with the class. Leaders make sure that the teaching of vocabulary is a clear focus across the school. This work is beginning to have a positive impact for pupils.

Leaders have made extensive use of additional tutoring programmes to address the gaps in pupils' knowledge caused by national lockdowns.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access the same curriculum as their peers. Generally, they are supported effectively in lessons. Most teachers expertly adapt their teaching to make sure that pupils with SEND are included. However, some relevant staff are not involved in monitoring the consistency of the provision for these pupils. Leaders have ensured that they have robust support in place for struggling readers. They have plans to develop this provision yet further.

Pupils behave well. At social times, they act with maturity and consideration. There is very little disruption in lessons. If it occurs, it is dealt with effectively by staff. Teachers have high expectations for pupils' participation in lessons

Leaders are committed to giving pupils a wide range of experiences beyond the classroom. They provide theatre and museum trips, among others, to make sure pupils gain cultural experiences. Student leadership programmes help pupils build independence and develop responsibility. Many pupils, including those with SEND, benefit from these enrichment opportunities.

Pupils believe that they are treated fairly in this school. They are taught about tolerance and respect. The relationships around site reflect these values. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and consent. Leaders ensure pupils are prepared to take their place in society.

Careers provision is a strength of this school. Leaders ensure that pupils receive the right advice and information to make the best choices about their futures. Leaders involve parents closely in this process. Leaders consider the skills that pupils will need in their local area. They check that pupils have a secure destination after they leave.

Staff are proud to work at this school. They believe that leaders consider their well-being. Staff at all levels feel well supported. Teachers in the early stages of their careers are positive about the community atmosphere. They say that they feel welcomed immediately.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils feel safe here. They trust the adults in school to keep them safe. Staff clearly understand the risks that pupils might face in the community. Staff know what signs to look out for and report. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe online. They learn about risks outside school and how to manage them.

Leaders take appropriate action to keep pupils safe. They act on information quickly. Leaders carefully monitor vulnerable pupils. They ensure that these pupils and their families are provided with the support they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Curriculum thinking is stronger in some subjects than in others. In some subject areas, leaders have not thought carefully enough about what the most important knowledge is that they want pupils to know. Leaders should ensure that all subject areas are planned precisely in this regard.
- The quality assurance and monitoring systems for pupils with SEND could be strengthened further by involving all relevant stakeholders in the process. Leaders should ensure that robust systems are in place to assure themselves of the consistency of this provision across the school.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Ferryhill Business and Enterprise College, to be good in November 2014.

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	145253
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10241354
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	804
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Garry Stout
Executive Headteacher	Kevin Brennan
Website	www.ferryhill.school
Date of previous inspection	19 November 2014, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Ferryhill School joined the Eden Learning Trust in May 2018.
- The school uses four registered alternative providers.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with a range of senior leaders, including the headteacher. They also spoke with the chair of the trust by telephone. An inspector met the chair and the vice-chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, history and science. 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 sample of pupils' work.

- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for safeguarding. They checked logs of actions taken to keep pupils safe.
- An inspector checked the single central record and other documentation regarding safe recruitment practices.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of pupils and staff, both formally and informally, during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils at social times.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for personal development and careers.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including minutes of governing body meetings, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online staff questionnaire. They also considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View online questionnaire. Inspectors also considered additional communications from parents. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Katie Spurr, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Julie McGrane

Ofsted Inspector

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