

Inspection of Kenton School

Drayton Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE3 3RU

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders are ambitious for pupils. They want pupils to be aspirational and achieve well. This vision is beginning to be realised. Pupils and staff recognise the improvements in several aspects of school life. However, the quality of pupils' experience in school varies. Although pupils benefit from a strong curriculum in some subjects, this is not consistently the case.

Despite its large size, the school has a community feel. Pupils and staff get on well. Pupils feel safe in school. Bullying is addressed firmly by staff. Recent lessons to develop pupils' understanding of bullying have led to fewer bullying incidents. Frequent surveys invite pupils to give their views on school life. Leaders use pupils' feedback to make further improvements.

Staff are visible around school. Leaders have established well-understood routines. These help to keep the atmosphere calm and orderly. Pupils know what is expected of them. Many reach the high standards that leaders set. However, some pupils do not. Despite support, a minority of pupils keep making the same mistakes.

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

Much has improved in Kenton School. Shrewd investment by the trust has increased leadership capacity. The arrival of new trust leadership has seen the rate of improvement gather pace. Leadership throughout the school has strengthened. Leaders are taking staff with them on the school's improvement journey. Staff are proud to work at the school. Most are positive about the efforts of leaders to support them and consider their well-being.

Staff benefit from various programmes of training. They are more skilled and, as a result, pupils are getting a better education than they once were. Some previous weaknesses in the school have been transformed into real strengths. The remaining areas of weakness identified by inspectors did not come as a surprise. Leaders, governors and trustees have an accurate view of what else needs to be done. Work to address remaining weaknesses is already underway. More time is needed for recent changes to bear fruit to ensure that the school provides a consistently effective quality of education.

Senior and subject leaders have designed ambitious subject curriculums. Curriculum planning is typically clear and well sequenced. However, because the curriculum has not been effective over time, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge in some subjects. There is more work to do to ensure that these gaps are addressed.

Clearer expectations from leaders have strengthened the teaching of the curriculum in a number of areas. However, the use of assessment by teachers is variable. For example, leaders expect teachers to assess pupils' knowledge during lessons. Some teachers do this well. They pick up on pupils' misconceptions and swiftly address

them. Other teachers do not. They do not spot the mistakes that pupils make. This hinders the progress that pupils make in learning the curriculum.

Sixth-form students have a rich educational experience. There is a wide offer of academic and vocational courses to choose from. Students are enthused by their subjects. They make good progress on their programmes of study. The qualifications achieved by students support them to take their next step in education, employment or training.

Staff are adept at meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders provide valuable information about what works for individual pupils, and what does not. Teachers use this to help pupils with SEND to achieve well. Pupils who attend the specially resourced provisions benefit from the support that they receive.

Behaviour has improved. Despite this, some pupils struggle to behave appropriately. Over time, suspensions have been stubbornly high. There is a range of approaches taken to help pupils who receive sanctions for their behaviour. Although they value this support, some pupils still find it hard to turn things around. There is more work to do to ensure that pupils behave consistently well across the school.

A significant minority of pupils do not attend school regularly. Recent systems to improve attendance have been introduced. Although much is being done to improve attendance, it is too early to see the sustained impact of leaders' work.

The personal development offer in school is broad and well led. The programme is well designed. Weekly lessons help develop pupils' understanding of important issues in society. Weaknesses in the previous personal development offer are now being addressed. For example, careers advice has been improved following some disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Pupils from Year 7 upwards now get useful information about potential career routes.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take a systematic approach to building staff's knowledge of safeguarding. Staff report concerns in a timely manner. They know the importance of passing on minor concerns so that pastoral staff can build a clear picture around pupils. This supports leaders to swiftly identify pupils who may need help and to ensure that they get the support they require.

Leaders understand the community well. They identify emerging risks that pupils may face away from school. This feeds into the school's personal development programme so that pupils are taught how to keep safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is variation between some subjects in the effectiveness with which teachers deliver the curriculum. This means that some pupils do not learn as well as they should in some subjects. Leaders should continue to improve staff expertise so that there is greater consistency in the quality of education across the school.
- A minority of pupils do not behave as well as they should. This leads to repeated suspensions, which means that they miss lessons and fall behind. Leaders should take action to reduce the number of incidents of poor behaviour in school, including those leading to suspension.
- Some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, are absent from school too frequently. As a consequence, gaps in their knowledge develop over time. Leaders should ensure that new systems to improve attendance are carefully monitored and, if necessary, further developed, so that pupils attend school regularly.

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	138120
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10241171
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
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	1826
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	269
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Therese Quincey
Executive principal	Lee Kirtley
Principal	Bill Jordon CBE
Website	https://ks.northernleaderstrust.org
Date of previous inspection	15 December 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is one of two schools in the Northern Leaders Trust.
- A diverse range of pupils from a broad range of ethnic groups attend the school.
- The school has two specially resourced provisions for pupils with SEND. The provision for pupils with communication and interaction needs is attended by 24 pupils. The provision for pupils with speech and language needs is attended by five pupils.
- The school has a very small number of pupils who attend one of three registered alternative provisions.
- 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 graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the interim headteacher and other senior and middle leaders over the course of the inspection.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with the chief executive officer of the trust. They also met with representatives of the board of trustees and held a telephone conversation with the chair of the board of trustees. They also met with the chair of the local governing body and one other governor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, languages and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also met with curriculum leaders for geography, physical education (PE) and performing arts, as well as visiting some geography and PE lessons. An inspector met with the leader responsible for reading and visited some reading lessons. An inspector also reviewed samples of work produced by pupils with SEND.
- An inspector spent time in the school's specially resourced provisions and spoke to pupils attending the provisions. An inspector also spoke to representatives from the registered alternative provisions used by the school.
- Across the inspection, inspectors spoke to pupils and students, formally and informally, as well as observing social time and lesson changeover.
- Inspectors also spoke with teachers, including a group of early careers teachers.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and the trust's human resources director. During these meetings, the lead inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the single central record and safeguarding records. Inspectors also spoke to pupils and staff about safeguarding, formally and informally.
- A range of school documentation was reviewed, including records of behaviour incidents, school improvement plans and minutes from meetings of the trustees and local governing body.
- Responses to Ofsted's parent, staff and pupil surveys were considered by inspectors. An inspector also spoke to one parent by telephone.

Inspection team

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