

Inspection of Darton Academy

Ballfield Lane, Darton, Barnsley S75 5EF

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 February 2023

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils access a broad range of extra-curricular educational opportunities that enhance their wider development extremely well. Leaders use additional government funding effectively, to ensure that all pupils benefit from these opportunities. For example, through leaders' use of this funding, the number of pupils completing the Duke of Edinburgh's Award is increasing year-on-year. Leaders place pupils' personal development at the centre of their intent for the school. They integrate this within all aspects of staff's work. Leaders have developed a well-designed personal, social and health education curriculum. They adapt its content to respond to local issues and to reflect pupils' needs at different ages.

Pupils behave to a high standard. They move around the site in a calm and organised manner. Bullying is infrequent. In a small minority of cases, pupils do not report instances of bullying to staff. This means that some cases are not resolved as quickly as they could be. Pupils are safe in school. They know how to raise concerns with an adult.

Leaders have designed a high-quality curriculum for pupils. Teachers use common routines across the school. This means that pupils know what to expect in each subject. Pupils attend well and focus on their learning. Lessons are rarely disrupted by pupils' poor behaviour. Consequently, they achieve well in external examinations.

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

Pupils study a broad range of subjects across key stages 3 and 4. The number of pupils studying towards the EBacc suite of qualifications is increasing. Subject leaders have designed a well-sequenced curriculum. They prioritise the most important knowledge that pupils must learn. In many subjects, this draws on the strongest practice from across the trust. All pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), access the same curriculum.

Teachers explain new learning clearly. They build on what pupils know from previous years. Leaders have established an agreed structure to lessons. Teachers apply these routines consistently, for example by using 'demonstrate and connect' tasks to check on what pupils know. Teachers regularly praise pupils for the quality of their work. They do this through activities such as the weekly 'proud Thursday' event. When consequences are used, they are given compassionately.

Leaders know pupils with SEND well. They provide teachers with detailed information about pupils' needs. Teachers use this to adapt their teaching effectively. Despite this, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND currently perform less well than their peers in external examinations.

Leaders have made reading a focus for the school. They provide pupils with free reading books. Pupils access a range of initiatives, such as 'reading routes' and 'book

worms', to help develop their love of reading. Pupils have had the opportunity to interview some of these authors online. Pupils in the early stages of learning to read are identified quickly. They receive extra support to help them catch up.

The proportion of pupils who receive suspensions is low. Leaders make sure that pupils are well supported when they return to school. Pupils attend school regularly. Leaders have developed improved systems for attendance. With the exception of pupils with SEND, rates of absence and persistent absence are declining. Although leaders have improved communication between school and home, including about attendance, a minority of parents and carers do not feel well heard.

A small number of pupils receive some of their education at alternative providers. Leaders choose these providers carefully and include parents in the process. They select placements which are in pupils' best interests. All pupils benefit from highly effective careers advice and guidance. As a result of this, pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their education, training or employment.

Leaders' ambitious vision that all pupils will access a wide range of rich, educational experiences is being realised. One such experience is a visit by the Northern Contemporary Dance School. Many pupils have experienced a residential visit, such as a ski trip or a visit to London. In many cases, such as the 'dark skies' science project, these exciting activities are closely aligned with the aims of the curriculum. The charitable work of the school is led by the 'junior leadership team'. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND benefit most from these opportunities.

Pupils learn about important concepts, including fundamental British values, during ethics, philosophy and citizenship (EPC) lessons. Leaders have designed a comprehensive package that broadens pupils' horizons. During key stage 3, pupils' experience is enriched by the 'pledges programme'. This aims to develop pupils into positive members of society. One example of this involves pupils working towards an 'Eco-Schools' award. Leaders make sure that all pupils benefit from this exemplary provision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders know pupils who attend the school well. They understand the local risks and teach pupils about these. During tutor and EPC lessons, pupils learn about issues such as knife crime, how to stay safe online and how to promote good mental health.

Safeguarding staff are knowledgeable and well trained. They provide appropriate training to the wider staff team. Staff understand how to report concerns about a pupil's welfare. They do this in a timely way. Leaders maintain detailed records of concerns. They work effectively with external agencies to arrange appropriate support for pupils. Leaders advocate on behalf of pupils when required.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some members of the wider-school community do not feel listened to. They are not as supportive of the actions of the school as they could be. Leaders should continue to embed and develop the recently improved communication methods to ensure that all stakeholders are aligned in their support for pupils, leaders and the school as a whole.
- A minority of bullying incidents go unreported or are not resolved as quickly as they might be. This causes a minority of pupils to feel less safe than they could. Leaders should continue to promote methods for pupils to report their concerns.

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	146320
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	10255558
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,157
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Steve Hodsman
Principal	Anna Rooney
Website	www.dartonacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Delta Academies Trust, a multi-academy trust. It became part of the trust in October 2018.
- The principal was appointed to their current role in March 2022.
- The school uses three Ofsted registered alternative providers.
- Approximately 12% of pupils are pupils with SEND and 26% of pupils are in receipt of free school meals.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- The lead inspector met with members of the trust board, the local governing body and the chief executive officer of the trust.

- During the inspection, inspectors met with the principal. They also met with other senior and middle leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding, personal development, careers, attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, modern foreign languages, art and design technology. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Members of the inspection team looked at a range of documentation regarding the support pupils with SEND receive. Inspectors looked at the quality of the provision for pupils with SEND in lessons.
- Inspectors met with the designated lead for safeguarding. They checked records of actions taken by leaders to keep pupils safe. Inspectors scrutinised the single central record of recruitment checks.
- A wide range of pupils and staff talked with inspectors, formally and informally, about the safeguarding culture in school over the course of the inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including minutes from governing body meetings and the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- Inspectors looked at a range of information regarding behaviour. Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils at social times.
- The views of parents, pupils and staff who responded to Ofsted's surveys were considered.

Inspection team

Thomas Wraith, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Chris Fletcher	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Cole	Ofsted Inspector
Bernard Clark	Ofsted Inspector
Pritiben Patel	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023