

# Inspection of a good school: Wolsingham School

The Grammar School Building, West End, Wolsingham, Bishop Auckland, County Durham  
DL13 3DJ

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Inspection dates: 16 and 17 May 2023

## Outcome

Wolsingham School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Wolsingham school is a welcoming and friendly school with strong links to the local community. Staff and pupils understand the shared values to 'work hard, get involved, be kind and take responsibility.' Leaders use these values to create a positive environment in which to learn. Pupils enjoy the wide range of opportunities that are available to them, such as the Combined Cadet Force. Pupils take part in events to support the local community, for example the winter warmers project that provides meals for older local residents.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Behaviour is good. Most pupils conduct themselves very well. They are polite and respectful. Bullying is rare. When bullying does happen, it is managed well by staff.

Pupils study a broad curriculum. Leaders have put in place a curriculum that supports pupils to go on to further study, as well as being applicable to the world of work. Teachers endeavour to make their subject relevant to the lives of the pupils. For example, science teaching makes explicit links to the local rural economy.

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

Leaders have ensured that the ambitious curriculum supports pupils to go on to further study and training. Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from a curriculum that is carefully structured to build knowledge over time. In most subjects, this has been effective. Teachers are clear in their explanations. They check that pupils are remembering important knowledge. However, in a few subjects, teachers do not consistently adapt their teaching to meet the needs of pupils at different starting points. Leaders are aware of this.

The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is effective. Leaders have made this a priority by delivering more training to teachers. As a

result, teachers are equipped to ensure that pupils with SEND receive the right support at the right time.

A strong culture of reading is evident across school. The vibrant library is at the heart of the school's social area. Teachers plan reading opportunities in most lessons. As a result, pupils' technical vocabulary is developing in a range of subjects. Pupils with weaker reading skills are supported to improve their reading rapidly. This support is effective because it carefully checks what barriers pupils face in their reading. It is well planned and delivered by staff with the right training.

Leaders have recently implemented a new behaviour system. The new system is simpler. It is understood well by pupils and staff. Overall, behaviour in lessons and at social times is good. However, a small number of pupils have received suspensions. Pupils who are suspended miss time in lessons. Leaders are aware of this and are taking effective steps to support pupils to improve their behaviour and attend school regularly.

Leaders have developed an effective programme of careers advice and guidance. All pupils have the opportunity to undertake work experience. Local employers and education and training providers regularly visit the school. The careers programme is supplemented by other opportunities, such as 'take your child to work day'. Pupils are positive about these experiences.

Many pupils find it hard to stay for activities after school because they have to get a bus home. To compensate for this, teachers offer a wide range of lunchtime clubs. This is encouraging a broad range of pupils to join in enrichment activities. Parents and carers are generally very happy with the education and opportunities provided by the school. However, some parents feel that communication with teachers is not as effective as it could be. Leaders are aware of this and are taking steps to address it.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. Staff know the risks that pupils face and know what to do to support vulnerable pupils. Staff training is effective. Appropriate recruitment checks are carried out. Leaders respond quickly to safeguarding concerns. They work effectively with external agencies.

Pupils are taught about important aspects of safeguarding, such as healthy relationships and online safety. Pupils know who to speak to if they have any concerns.

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

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

- Some pupils are not in school regularly because they have been suspended. This means that they miss out on important teaching. Leaders should continue to work with pupils to improve their behaviour so that they attend school regularly.

## 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Wolsingham School, to be good in January 2015.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	148109
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10269093
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	714
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Alan Boddy
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nick Mitchinson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://www.wolsingham.school.net">https://www.wolsingham.school.net</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Wolsingham School converted to become an academy school in September 2020. When its predecessor school, Wolsingham School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is part of the Advance Learning Partnership, a multi-academy trust. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2021.
- The school uses five alternative education providers. Two of these providers are unregistered.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## 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 the chief executive, the chair of trustees, the chair of the academy council, the headteacher, other senior leaders and curriculum subject leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into English, science, art and history. 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 scrutinised safeguarding records, met with those responsible for leading safeguarding, and spoke to pupils and staff about safeguarding.
- The views of parents were considered through their responses to Ofsted's survey for parents.
- Inspectors met with staff and pupils to gather further information about some aspects of personal development and behaviour.
- The views of pupils were taken into account by speaking with pupils and through their responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils.
- The views of staff were considered through meetings with teachers and through Ofsted's staff survey.

### **Inspection team**

Carl Sugden, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Dan Whieldon

Ofsted Inspector

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