

Inspection of John Spence Community High School

Preston Road, North Shields, Tyne and Wear NE29 9PU

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 June 2023

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders' ambition for a broad and inclusive curriculum is not always matched by pupils' experience in the classroom. Leaders recognise that improvements in several subject areas are required. Recent changes to the curriculum, assessment processes and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have taken place. However, the impact of this work is not secure.

Pupils demonstrate positive behaviour within classrooms. They listen well to staff and their peers. Pupils' wider development is a strong feature of the school. This includes through the 'GOALS' programme, which develops pupils' confidence and resilience. Leaders' work to improve behaviour and attendance across the school has been effective. Removals from lessons, rates of suspension and persistent absence have all reduced over time.

Pupils and staff at John Spence Community High School share warm and respectful relationships. Bullying is rare. Leaders closely monitor and respond to any incidents of unkind behaviour. Pupils at the school are tolerant and respectful of others' differences. Pupils with SEND are included, inside and outside of lessons. This includes a dedicated 'Tuesday Club', where young people from across the community come together to take part in a range of activities. In addition, a sports and performing arts 'academy' programme is attended by many pupils. These opportunities are valued by pupils who attend them.

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

Leaders have created a curriculum intended to give all pupils access to a broad and balanced education. Curriculum plans set out what pupils will learn and in what order. Leaders have considered where pupils might have gaps in their knowledge and skills, including those caused by the pandemic. However, this ambition is not realised for all pupils in the classroom. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what some pupils can, and should, be able to do. They do not deliver the curriculum consistently well.

Leaders understand that improvements are needed in several subject areas. They have begun to take action to improve the quality of education provided at the school. However, some aspects of their work have had limited impact. Leaders' quality assurance is not as accurate as it might be. This limits how effectively those responsible for governance can support and challenge leaders' actions.

Some teachers do not adapt learning well to meet the needs of all pupils, including pupils with SEND. Sometimes, teachers do not ask effective questions that check what pupils do, and do not, understand. Too often, pupils do not produce work of a sufficiently high standard. Some pupils do not have a strong understanding of what they have been taught.

Assessment is used inconsistently across the school. The way in which teachers check what pupils know and remember lacks precision. Pupils do not always respond to the improvements they are asked to make in their work. Teachers do not use information from assessments well to plan future learning. As a result, pupils continue to have gaps in their knowledge of the curriculum.

Pupils with SEND are supported by specialist staff, who know their needs well. These staff are effective at providing the help and guidance that pupils with SEND need to access the curriculum. However, teachers do not always make suitable adjustments to lessons and activity choices to support the learning of pupils with SEND. As a result, pupils with SEND experience a variable quality of education.

Leaders understand the importance of all pupils being able to read well. Improving pupils' literacy is a priority across the school. However, much of what leaders have implemented in this regard is new. Pupils lack confidence and precision when using new vocabulary in their written work and when reading aloud.

Pupils learn about several important topics within the 'Fit for Life' curriculum. These include how to stay safe and healthy, be a responsible citizen and about British values and the protected characteristics. Most pupils understand the messages this curriculum contains well. They demonstrate tolerance and respect for those different from themselves.

All pupils have access to a varied careers curriculum. This includes work experience opportunities, a career fair and visits to further education settings. Leaders are beginning to include more information on career paths linked to different subjects. For example, a 'Futures' month takes place where several lessons focus on careers in greater depth.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, staff and governors understand the risks that pupils at the school might face, both online and in person. Staff are confident to report any concerns they have. They know the signs that a young person might be at risk of, or subject to, harm.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe and healthy. The curriculum includes important messages about drugs, alcohol, open water and sharing personal information. Leaders take effective action when they suspect that a pupil might be at risk of harm. Support for pupils and their families is strong. The school works well with external agencies to help protect and support vulnerable pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The quality of education pupils receive is inconsistent. In several subjects, teachers do not adapt learning to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND. Pupils do not learn the curriculum as leaders intend. This creates gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Leaders should ensure they continue to identify weaker practice among staff and provide appropriate professional development to improve the quality of education across the school.
- Assessment is used inconsistently across the school. Teachers' understanding of how to use different types of assessment to inform next steps in learning is underdeveloped. In some cases, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can, and do, produce during assessment tasks. Pupils do not improve consistently following feedback from staff. Leaders should ensure that all staff understand when and how assessment should be used and monitor the impact of this work on pupils' understanding and outcomes.
- Leaders' reading strategy, including support for those at an early stage of learning to read, is new and not implemented consistently across the school. As a result, some pupils struggle to learn the curriculum as well as they might because their understanding of text and vocabulary requires further improvement. Leaders should ensure they embed the plans they have already put in place and provide targeted training for staff to ensure these plans are implemented consistently across the school.
- Leaders' approach to quality assurance does not provide them with an accurate understanding of the areas for improvement that exist in the quality of education that pupils receive. This also impacts upon how effectively governors can support and challenge school leaders to ensure ongoing school improvement. Leaders should ensure they analyse the impact of their work with precision and plan targeted next steps to ensure improvements are made, especially to the quality of education that pupils receive in some subjects.

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	108644
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	10255673
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	848
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Adam Langman
Headteacher	Jonathan Heath
Website	www.johnspence.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 and 30 November 2017

Information about this school

- The school has an additional resourced provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties.
- The school makes use of three providers of off-site alternative education. Two providers are registered and subject to inspection by Ofsted. One provider is 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

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 school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, and governors. Inspectors spoke to teaching and non-teaching staff, in addition to a representative from the local authority.
- To evaluate the quality of education, deep dives were carried out in English, science, geography and physical education. Inspectors spoke with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, looked at books and spoke to both pupils and staff. Inspectors also met with curriculum leaders for mathematics and history.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for careers education at the school.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experience in lessons, enrichment opportunities and what it is like to attend the school.
- Inspectors met with early career teachers and those who mentor them.
- One inspector listened to pupils read. The inspector also met with leaders responsible for literacy across the school.
- Inspectors examined the schools' behaviour records, spoke to pupils who had been suspended from school and spoke with providers of alternative education.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator. They looked at a range of documentation, including education, health and care plans and individual learning plans. Inspectors also checked how pupils with SEND are supported in lessons.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, including checks made on all adults who access the school site. Inspectors spoke with pupils and staff to ensure their understanding of safeguarding procedures. An inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to check on their work to keep pupils safe in school.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's parent, pupil and staff surveys, including free-text responses.

Inspection team

John Linkins, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lindsay Oyston	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Featherstone	Ofsted Inspector
Jonathan Ferstenberg	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