

Inspection of NCEA Duke's Secondary School

Academy Road, Ashington, Northumberland NE63 9FZ

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

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

Duke's Secondary School is a welcoming school where there has been much improvement. There are strong relationships between staff and pupils. Leaders have put in place a new behaviour system, and staff and pupils speak highly of these changes. This has resulted in a calm and orderly environment in school.

Leaders and teachers are ambitious that pupils will do well in their future lives. Staff successfully promote pupils' personal development and well-being. For example, enrichment is built into the school timetable, which enables pupils to experience a range of activities.

Currently, the quality of education and the standards that pupils achieve are not good enough. Leaders are raising expectations of what pupils should achieve. Students in the sixth form benefit from its small size. They receive personalised support and are taught well.

Most pupils say that they feel safe in school and have an adult whom they can speak to if they are worried or concerned. Many pupils say that bullying is rare and that it is dealt with well by staff if reported.

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

Leaders have begun work to improve the quality of education. There are now much clearer links between pupils' primary curriculum in key stage 2 and their new key stage 3 curriculum. In all subjects, leaders have clear aims for what they want pupils to learn. There is evidence that, in some subjects, pupils are now knowing and remembering more important knowledge. However, not all teachers are routinely checking how secure pupils' knowledge is. This means that some teachers ask pupils to complete work that they cannot do due to gaps in their knowledge. Teaching is much more secure in the sixth form, where teachers check precisely what pupils know to inform their next steps.

Pupils in key stage 4 select courses from a range of options. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can study the same curriculum. In key stage 5, students can choose from a small number of A-level subjects and from a wider range of vocational courses. Pupils study different combinations of subjects that suit their needs, interests and future ambitions.

Support for pupils with SEND is positive. They are supported effectively to access the curriculum. Knowledgeable leaders use clear strategies to support pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs well. There are many safe spaces in school for pupils with SEND to use. They very much value these spaces. For example, the sensory room enables pupils to calm and reduce their anxiety.

Leaders have prioritised reading and literacy. The English department promotes a love of reading well. There are many activities and events in the library that support

reading. Staff assess pupils' needs in Year 7 to help them to understand who needs extra support with reading. Some pupils access a phonics programme if they need help decoding words. However, too few pupils currently access this programme. It is not delivered frequently enough to have maximum impact. Some pupils also have insecure knowledge of letter formation and, as a result, have poor handwriting. Some pupils with SEND receive appropriate handwriting support, but more pupils would benefit from this.

A small number of pupils attend alternative provision. This is being used in the best interests of pupils. Leaders take responsibility for their safeguarding and well-being. However, records of leaders' visits to these providers are not appropriately thorough. There is a lack of clarity when tracking what has been monitored when visits do take place.

Behaviour and attitudes have improved significantly of late. There is a clear behaviour policy in place. Some pupils report minor variations in the application of the policy. These are not detrimental to overall standards of behaviour. Leaders track and monitor incidents of behaviour. However, their analysis of trends and patterns in pupils' behaviour are not as precise as they could be to secure further improvements.

There is a well-considered personal development programme in place. Pupils take their personal development seriously and speak confidently about important issues such as inclusivity. Careers advice and guidance are particularly strong. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, are well supported to gain insight into the range of study or work opportunities available to them.

Leadership, at all levels, is focused on continued improvement to the school. While there is still progress to be made to improve the quality of education, other areas of school improvement are more secure. Leaders are ambitious and know what needs to be done. Most staff who work at the school feel happy and well supported. They appreciate the way that leaders consider their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff know how to keep pupils safe. Staff receive regular training and are aware of the local risks that pupils face. All staff recognise that safeguarding is an important part of their role.

Staff are aware of the process of reporting a safeguarding concern. Leaders keep accurate and detailed records of reported concerns. They make sure that pupils receive the support they need, including help from external agencies.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- School leaders have not ensured that their records of visits to alternative providers are clear enough. They do not have sufficient detail to evidence that pupils who attend these providers have the quality of their curriculum thoroughly monitored. Leaders cannot be sure of the continued suitability of the alternative providers in meeting pupils' needs. Leaders should ensure that they keep appropriately detailed records of their visits to alternative providers so that they are assured as to the continued suitability of placements for pupils.
- There is variability in how well teachers deliver the curriculum. Some teachers do not check systematically what pupils know and understand in lessons. This means that, sometimes, lessons move on before pupils have learned the curriculum securely. Leaders should ensure that teaching of the curriculum is of a consistently high quality.
- Some reading and wider literacy interventions do not include all pupils who have weaknesses in these areas. This means that too few pupils can access the support they need to improve. Leaders should ensure that all pupils who need extra help with their reading and literacy skills receive timely support and appropriate intervention to ensure that they make rapid progress.
- While leaders have a good understanding of individual pupils and their involvement in behavioural incidents, there is not enough analysis of patterns and trends. This means that leaders are not fully aware of which groups of pupils are involved in different types of incidents. Leaders should ensure that they have robust systems in place to support further improvements in behaviour and reduce the need for suspensions.

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	135886
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10268216
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,007
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	70
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Alan Hardie
Headteacher	Ruston Atkinson
Website	http://www.ncea.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	20 January 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust. The school is the only secondary school in the trust.
- 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.
- The school uses five alternative providers for a small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

- 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: art, geography, science and mathematics. 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 samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to some other curriculum leaders.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for safeguarding. Inspectors checked logs of actions leaders take to keep pupils safe. An inspector checked the single central record and looked at documents related to safer recruitment.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils in lessons and at social times. They spoke to pupils about behaviour in school.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the local governing body, including the chair. They also met with a representative from the diocese and directors from the trust. They also met with the chair of the trust.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of data about behaviour and attendance, including information about the use of alternative provision.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, the school improvement partner report and minutes of local governing body meetings.
- Inspectors considered the online responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys, and to Ofsted's parent survey, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Jessica McKay, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Gabrielle Reddington	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Hassack	Ofsted Inspector
Jill Bowe	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