

# Inspection of a good school: Thomas Bewick School

Linhope Road, West Denton, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE5 2LW

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Inspection dates:

19 and 20 September 2023

## Outcome

Thomas Bewick School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Daley Barber-Allen. This school is part of Prosper Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Chris Richardson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Joanne Clifford Swan.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are nurtured. There are high aspirations for what pupils with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) can achieve. Pupils receive good-quality care and support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils enjoy coming to school. There are established routines that help them to feel safe. The learning environment is thoughtfully designed. Pupils have purposely designed spaces and suitable resources to reduce their anxiety and help them to learn.

Behaviour is good. Pupils have high levels of support from staff. They learn to understand their emotions and regulate their behaviour. Staff prioritise the building of trusting relationships with pupils. Pupils appreciate the support and kindness that staff provide to help them.

The curriculum is broad and ambitious. Pupils benefit from bespoke learning and therapeutic experiences. Their sensory needs are well supported. They learn to communicate through various means. From the early years, children learn to develop independence. There is a strong focus on preparing pupils for adulthood and future careers. Pupils appreciate activities and trips within the community. Older pupils take part in work experience. Post-16 students grow vegetables in the school's allotment. They enjoy cooking and serving the food in the school's Billy Buzz café.

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

The school has revised and strengthened the curriculum. It is designed and sequenced to help pupils to do their best. The different curriculum pathways support the specific needs

of pupils from the early years to post-16. New approaches to the teaching of reading and mathematics are having a positive impact. The school has raised expectations for what pupils can achieve. Pupils build their knowledge and skills well over time. They revisit and practise their learning. They apply their skills in real life. This includes when visiting a local supermarket. Post-16 students practise their skills when working in the school's café. They plan, prepare, cook and sell the food. Staff check frequently the progress that pupils make. They use this information to plan suitable next steps for pupils.

The school works with the local authority and parents and carers. They consider pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plan requirements before they join the school. Staff assess pupils' needs thoroughly. They determine which curriculum pathway will best support pupils' learning, behaviour and personal development. The information from assessments is used to create individual progress plans for pupils. The school ensures that learning, therapy and support are linked precisely to each pupil's EHC plan.

A variety of external professionals support the school. Therapists work with staff to provide appropriate advice and support for pupils' learning. They devise programmes of support for pupils' social, physical and emotional development. Pupils enjoy their 'rebound' sessions. These sessions help pupils to develop their physical health and to be ready to learn.

Reading is a high priority for the school. It supports the development of pupils' communication skills. Staff promote the joy of reading from the early years. Pupils are enthusiastic about their new school library. They are proud that they helped to choose the selection of books to interest everyone. Within the early years or when it is developmentally appropriate for them, children learn to develop an awareness of sounds. They enjoy songs and listening to nursery rhymes and stories. Staff receive good-quality training and guidance to teach phonics well. The books pupils read match the sounds that they know. Staff use advice from speech and language therapists to help pupils to develop their speech, language and communication skills. Pupils who need more help are given specific and timely support.

Several new staff have recently joined the school. They receive thorough training and ongoing coaching from skilled staff. However, the support that some adults provide to pupils to help them to manage their behaviour and learning varies in quality and approach.

The curriculum to support pupils' wider development is threaded through all aspects of school life. Pupils receive suitable relationships, sex and health education. They learn how to stay safe, including when online and within the community. Pupils celebrate the different faiths and cultures within the school community. They learn about different relationships and fundamental British values. Pupils enjoy participating in school productions. The recent summer term performance of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory was a big success. Pupils are proud of the school's football team. They are currently on a winning streak! Visitors to the school inform and inspire pupils. Older pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. They enjoy residential trips and activities such as rock climbing, archery and sailing. Although pupils learn about protected characteristics, they do not have sufficient depth of understanding.

The school provides pupils, including post-16 students, with independent careers guidance. There is an ambitious programme in place to promote further education, employment and training for pupils. When needed, the school supports pupils to transfer into adult social care services.

Most staff enjoy working at the school. They feel well supported by their colleagues. They value the training, coaching and support provided by the school and the trust. They feel that the school is considerate of their welfare and workload.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- Pupils do not have good enough understanding of protected characteristics. This means that pupils are not as well prepared as they could be for life in modern Britain. Leaders should ensure that these aspects of the curriculum are sufficiently well taught so that pupils develop a thorough understanding of protected characteristics.
- On occasion, the support that some learning support assistants provide to help pupils to manage their behaviour and learning varies in quality and approach. Some pupils are better supported than others. Leaders should ensure that all learning support assistants are trained equally well to provide consistent and effective support to pupils.

## **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, Thomas Bewick School, to be good in July 2013.

## 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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the definition of [children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	146680
<b>Local authority</b>	Newcastle upon Tyne
<b>Inspection number</b>	10268437
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	337
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	19
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Joanne Clifford Swan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Daley Barber-Allen
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thomasbewick.newcastle.sch.uk">www.thomasbewick.newcastle.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school provides education for pupils with ASD. All pupils have EHC plans.
- There are currently no nursery-aged children attending the school.
- Since the school opened in 2019, there have been several changes in leadership and to staffing. A new headteacher was appointed in 2020. The school has expanded over recent years. This expansion has been in response to the growing need in the local authority for special school places for pupils with ASD. Several new members of staff have been appointed in response to the school's expansion.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- In addition to the main school site, the school also operates from two other sites. These are located at Studio West School, West Denton Way, West Denton NE5 2SZ and

Broadwood Primary School, Broadwood Road, Newcastle NE15 7TB. Both of these sites are located at the same addresses as other schools.

- The school provides outreach support for identified pupils within their mainstream settings.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, five assistant headteachers, safeguarding leaders, leaders responsible for the management of pupils' special educational needs and some curriculum managers. They met with some members of staff, including some early career teachers and some pupils. The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer for the trust, three members of the local advisory committee including the chair, the chair of the trust board and one trustee. The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with the head of SEND for Newcastle local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: reading, mathematics and personal, social and health education. Inspectors looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke to teaching staff and spoke to some pupils about their learning and about the school more generally. Inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work where available, and some pupils' EHC plans and related personalised learning and behaviour plans. The lead inspector listened to some pupils reading to an adult.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders, staff and pupils about the school's approach to safeguarding pupils in school. The lead inspector checked the single central register and reviewed records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. Checks were made on staff training and safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for parents and carers, pupils and staff. They spoke to some parents at the end of the school day.

## Inspection team

Stephanie Innes-Taylor, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mary Cook

His Majesty's Inspector

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