

Inspection of a good school: Rise Carr College

Eldon Street, Darlington, County Durham DL3 0NS

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 November 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils who join the school have found it difficult to cope in their previous schools. Many have not attended school regularly in the past. Pupils are well cared for at this school. Staff know the social and emotional needs of pupils well. They provide effective pastoral support.

Many pupils have complex needs. Strong links with outside agencies and community organisations ensure that the school provides effective additional support for pupils. The school is tenacious. Staff work hard to give pupils a fresh start in education. Pupils leave the school at the end of Year 11 with plans for education, employment or training.

Pupils are safe at this school. Pupils are confident to talk to staff if they have any concerns. Bullying is rare and when it does happen it is dealt with well. There are positive relationships between staff and pupils.

Many pupils who attend Rise Carr College have been permanently excluded from their previous schools. Sometimes, pupils' behaviour has a negative impact on learning. Staff deal with behaviour issues calmly.

When pupils join the school, pupils have gaps in their learning. The school has effective links with pupils' previous schools. However, issues with pupils' reading and writing are not diagnosed effectively enough when they join the school. For some pupils, weaknesses in reading and writing are making it more difficult for them to fully access the school's curriculum.

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

When pupils join the school, staff ensure the information they receive is used well to develop a personalised curriculum for each pupil. Pupils study English, mathematics and science and a range of other subjects, including vocational and entry level qualifications.

The school's curriculum has recently been redesigned. The curriculum in some subjects is less well developed than others. In some subjects, the school has not identified the most essential knowledge and how this knowledge builds on what pupils already know over time. Sometimes pupils only remember superficial details of what they have been taught.

A number of pupils struggle with reading. The school does not ensure that they diagnose pupils' specific reading needs in phonics, fluency and comprehension. The school does not have a phonics programme to support those pupils who are at the early stages of reading. Pupils are not as well supported as they should be to catch up quickly in reading. Pupils who struggle with handwriting, letter formation and spelling are not well supported to improve their writing.

The school uses a range of alternative education providers to meet the diverse needs of pupils. The use of this provision is made with the best interests of pupils and is bespoke to each pupil's needs.

Staff have a good understanding of the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have detailed records of pupils with SEND. This information is shared with staff to ensure they can support these pupils in lessons. Staff receive regular training to support pupils' needs. For instance, more recent training has focused on trauma and foetal alcohol syndrome.

Pupils access a range of enrichment activities. Some of these enhance the taught curriculum. Other activities help to build pupils' confidence and self-esteem. The school's personal development curriculum gives pupils what they need at the right time. Pupils know and understand the risks in the locality such as county lines gangs. However, pupils do not have a good understanding of other faiths and cultures.

The school does not permanently exclude pupils. However, the number of suspensions has increased in recent years. Staff check pupils are safe when they are suspended from school. Alternative arrangements to suspensions are put in place when staff have any safeguarding concerns about a pupil.

Inspectors heard pupils swearing during the inspection. Staff do challenge pupils who swear. However, sometimes when pupils swear there are no further consequences.

Staff ensure that they understand the causes of pupils not attending well. They support pupils and their families to better engage in education. Where attendance concerns persist, staff liaise effectively with a range of outside agencies.

Many governors are also the school's stakeholders and local partners. Governors challenge and support leaders well. The vast majority of staff enjoy working at the school and feel well supported by leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is not a clear reading strategy where reading is at the forefront of pupils' learning. Weaker readers do not get the support that they need to catch up quickly. The school should ensure that there is a precise whole school reading strategy where pupils' specific needs are diagnosed quickly, staff are trained effectively to support pupils' reading needs, and pupils who struggle to read receive the right support.
- In some cases, issues with poor transcription means that pupils are not making the progress that they should. Issues with pupils' spelling, grammar, letter formation and handwriting are not being addressed swiftly enough when pupils join the school. The school should ensure that specific transcription issues are identify when pupils join the school, and pupils are supported to improve and build up their stamina in writing.
- The implementation of the school's curriculum is variable in some subjects. The school has not identified the most important knowledge that pupils need to remember in these subjects. Teachers do not consistently check that pupils remember the curriculum. The school should identify the most essential knowledge in each subject. The school should also ensure that teaching helps pupils to remember more of what they have been taught and teachers effectively check that pupils remember the most essential content.

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 school to be good in October 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

Unique reference number	131629
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10269257
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	71
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Su Gill
Headteacher	Sally Hudson
Website	www.risecarrcollege.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The number of pupils on roll has increased since the previous inspection and is above the school's pupil admissions number.
- The number of pupils on the school's roll with complex needs is increasing. The school takes pupils who are awaiting specialist provision places.
- Many pupils who join the school have an education, health and care plan.
- Several pupils who join the school have been permanently excluded from their previous school.
- There is a new headteacher and chair of the governing body since the previous inspection took place.
- The school runs three provisions: Eldon House, a resourced provision for pupils with SEND who have social, emotional and mental health needs, Rise Carr College and Clifton House.
- The school offers a 12-week placement for pupils from other schools at Clifton House. The aim of this provision is to support pupils' personal and social development. Pupils in Years 5, 6, 7 and 8 attend this provision daily for half the day. They attend their home school for the rest of the day. Provision for pupils in Years 5 and 6 was not

running during the inspection. Clifton House is based in a separate building at Hummersknott Academy.

- Rise Carr College and Eldon House are based on the main school site. Eldon House is a new building on the school site.
- The school uses nine unregistered alternative education providers: Boxwell, Outdoor Ambition, Future Pathways, N-Gage, Rightraxs, Open Arms, Learning Zone, Washington Riding Centre, and Academy 21.
- 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.

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.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors visited lessons, talked to pupils about their work, looked at samples of pupils' work and held discussions about the curriculum. Inspectors also visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work in some other subjects.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator and other leaders.
- An inspector visited three unregistered alternative education providers during the inspection with the assistant headteacher.
- The lead inspector met with some governors, including the chair and vice chair of the governing body and the virtual school headteacher, who is also a governor.
- The lead inspector held a telephone call with the assistant headteacher and the headteacher from a secondary school that sends pupils to this school. The lead inspector also spoke to a youth engagement and justice team leader and met with the head of education partnerships from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff, pupils and parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's surveys. The lead inspector also spoke to a parent on the telephone.

Inspection team

Michele Costello, lead inspector

James Duncan

Zoe Westley

Ofsted Inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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