

Inspection of Berwick Academy

Adams Drive, Spittal, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland TD15 2JF

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 February 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Tracy Hush. This school is part of Berwick Academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Clive Robinson.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school has high expectations for what pupils can achieve. It works hard to improve the quality of education that pupils receive. The school provides teachers with regular training and development. However, many pupils do not achieve well. They do not acquire the depth of knowledge and understanding they need for later learning.

Most pupils behave well. This is a calm and orderly school. Pupils are safe here. When bullying or other serious behaviours happen, the school deals with them well. However, in some lessons, pupils' behaviour and attitudes are not positive. A small number of pupils disrupt lessons, and others show a lack of commitment to their learning.

The school supports individual pupils well, particularly those pupils with specific needs. However, some pupils feel that the school does not take their views into account. Several pupils say they do not enjoy school. A significant minority do not attend school often enough.

The school provides pupils with a wide range of clubs and activities, including sports, Lego robotics, and a green car club. Pupils take part in educational visits that extend their learning. They take on roles such as rewards leaders and sports leaders. In the sixth form, some students take part in social action projects to improve the environment.

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

The school is working in a context that provides significant challenge. It is experiencing the ongoing impact of the pandemic. This impact is most evident regarding attendance and the attitudes of pupils, parents and carers to education. There is also a planned restructure of education in the area. The school is responding to these challenges in a positive manner in its drive to improve provision for pupils.

The school has established a broad and well-sequenced curriculum. In some subject areas, the curriculum is ambitious for what pupils can achieve. The school identifies the knowledge it wants pupils to gain and how this will develop over time. In key stage 4, the school provides pupils with several vocational courses. Pupils can study subjects such as engineering, health and social care, and business administration. Pupils can extend their learning in these vocational subjects as they progress on to A-level courses in the sixth form.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access the same curriculum as their peers. The school identifies their needs well. It provides the additional support these pupils need to achieve success. Pupils who are still at an early stage of reading get the help they need to catch up. This support, which

includes the teaching of phonics, helps pupils to become confident and fluent readers. Furthermore, the school prioritises time for pupils to read for pleasure.

Teachers revisit what pupils have learned before. They make pupils correct and add to their work. However, sometimes, they do not check pupils' understanding with enough rigour. The learning activities teachers select are not well matched to the intended learning. This means that some pupils do not secure the essential knowledge that they need. In the sixth form, teachers have an appropriate depth of subject knowledge. In most subjects, teachers deepen and extend students' knowledge and understanding effectively. However, such effective practice is not consistent across all subjects in the sixth form.

The school has established a clear approach to behaviour. Pupils know what the school expects of them. While the school does not tolerate low-level disruption in lessons, it nevertheless persists. A minority of pupils do not show positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils who want to focus on their work express frustration with pupils who disrupt lessons. The school uses suspension appropriately to address persistent disruptive behaviour.

Levels of absence are high, particularly for pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. The school works with pupils and families rigorously to improve attendance. This is starting to bring about positive improvements for some pupils. However, many pupils continue to miss school regularly, which impacts negatively on their learning.

The school has developed a comprehensive personal development programme. Pupils learn about relationships and equality and diversity in an age-appropriate way. They also learn about the importance of physical and mental health. The school has substantial provision for pupils with mental health needs. In the sixth form, Year 12 students are starting to experience a structured approach to their personal development. From Year 9, pupils receive the careers information and guidance they need to make well-informed choices about their future. In the sixth form, students receive appropriate support for writing applications to higher education, apprenticeships and employment.

The school has created a culture in which staff feel valued. It ensures that it prioritises staff workload and well-being. Staff show strong commitment to the school. The school seeks to engage and involve parents in the life of the school. However, many parents do not support the school's ethos. Trustees question the information provided to them by school leaders. They show an understanding of recent school developments. However, they have not sufficiently challenged the school to improve the quality of education and pupil outcomes.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers, including in the sixth form, do not systematically check pupils' understanding. They do not select learning activities effectively enough to secure and deepen pupils' knowledge. The school should build on its professional development programme for teachers. It should ensure that teachers develop the pedagogical content knowledge that allows them to secure a deep and coherent body of knowledge for pupils.
- Levels of absence and persistent absence are high, particularly for pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. This means that some pupils are missing a significant amount of their education and have gaps in their knowledge and understanding. The school should take further steps to improve pupils' attendance so that all pupils can achieve their full potential.
- Trustees do not provide leaders with sufficient challenge around improvements to pupils' attainment, progress and outcomes. This means that key areas for improvement are not prioritised with enough urgency. Trustees should ensure that they hold leaders to account with greater focus and rigour, including evaluating provision against national benchmarks.

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	137598
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10297357
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	13 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	583
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	114
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Clive Robinson
Headteacher	Ms Tracy Hush
Website	www.berwickacademy.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 October 2021, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of a single-academy trust, Berwick Academy Trust.
- The school uses three unregistered 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.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other senior leaders, and the chair and vice-chair of the board of trustees. They also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography, and design and technology. For each deep dive, the inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors also discussed the curriculum in science and physical education. They visited sixth-form lessons in biology, physics, business administration, and engineering.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils and staff, and to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Ian Rawstorne, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Alexandra Hook	Ofsted Inspector
Katie Spurr	His Majesty's Inspector

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