

# Inspection of Excelsior Academy

Denton Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE15 6AF

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Inspection dates: 8 and 9 May 2024

## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Early years provision

**Good**

Sixth-form provision

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

The principal of this school is James Andriot. This school is part of The Laidlaw Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Sally Newton, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Susanna Victoria Kempe.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

This is an inclusive all-through school with a diverse pupil intake. Pupils are polite and friendly. They treat each other with respect and build positive relationships with staff. Pupils support each other's learning and well-being. They take on roles such as well-being ambassadors. Sixth form students read with younger pupils.

The school has high expectations for what pupils can achieve. It is developing a curriculum that should help to fulfil those expectations for pupils. However, some pupils, particularly in the secondary phase, have significant gaps in their knowledge. High levels of absence have contributed to this.

Pupils behave well. In the early years, children follow established routines. As pupils move through the school, they show a readiness to learn. The school does not tolerate low-level disruption in lessons. When it does happen, the school deals with it effectively. This is a calm and orderly school.

The school provides pupils with a wide range of clubs and activities. Some pupils make good use of these. They develop new and existing talents and interests. The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. It also gives them the guidance they need to make their next steps in education, training and employment.

## **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 in regard to pupils' attendance and mental health. The school, supported by the trust, is responding to these challenges with both commitment and intelligence. Indeed, the school has made progress to improve provision for pupils across all phases of the school.

The school is developing a broad and ambitious curriculum. From the early years to the sixth form, the curriculum is well-sequenced. It is designed to ensure that pupils build their knowledge and skills in a logical and meaningful way. In the early years, this helps children to develop across the seven areas of learning. As pupils move through the school, the curriculum provides them with the essential knowledge they need. It also helps them to think and work like subject specialists. In the sixth form, the school has designed a curriculum that meets students' needs. It provides progression onto higher education, apprenticeships and employment. However, in some subjects at key stage 3 and 4, the curriculum requires further development to enable pupils to gain a deep and secure knowledge.

The school meets the different needs of pupils well. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access the same curriculum as their peers. The school provides staff with the training they require to meet the needs of pupils with

SEND. This helps pupils with SEND to make progress from their individual starting points.

From the early years to the sixth form, the school prioritises reading. It understands its fundamental importance to pupils' success in education and in their future lives and careers. From Reception, pupils learn to read using phonics. Teachers and other adults teach phonics well. Pupils who need help with their reading get it. In Reception and key stage 1, this helps pupils to keep up with their peers. In key stage 2 and beyond, this helps pupils to catch up with their peers and become confident and fluent readers. The school also meets the language needs of those pupils who have recently joined the school from abroad.

In the early years, the school has established a rich and purposeful learning environment. There is a central focus on developing children's language and communication skills. Children's personal, social and emotional development is also given high priority. Early years staff promote children's health, for example through daily teeth brushing in school. In the early years, children make effective progress from often very low starting points.

In the primary and secondary phases, teachers have a secure subject knowledge. They revisit what pupils have learned before and give pupils the feedback they need to improve their work. However, particularly at key stage 3 and 4, the quality of teaching is inconsistent. Some pupils are not given enough time to secure essential knowledge. While other pupils do not get enough opportunity to deepen and extend their learning. In the sixth form, teaching is more effective in developing the depth of knowledge and understanding students need.

Levels of pupils' absence are high. The school, supported by the trust, has made significant investment to address this. It has worked with external agencies to develop a coherent and extensive attendance strategy. It has created extra posts of responsibility for attendance. As a result of this, pupils' attendance is improving. The development of a positive school culture is also contributing to improved attendance.

The school provides pupils with a comprehensive and age-appropriate personal development programme. Pupils learn about important issues such as relationships and equality and diversity. They know and understand the importance of British values. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including online and in the local community. Careers provision is a strength. Pupils receive the guidance and information they need to make well-informed choices about their next steps.

Trustees and local governors exercise their roles and responsibilities with appropriate rigour. They hold school leaders to account and provide strategic oversight. Trust leaders work with school leaders to implement change. They do this in a way that is sensitive to staff workload. Staff enjoy working at the school.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- In some subjects in the secondary phase, the key stage 3 curriculum does not provide sufficient opportunity for pupils to deepen and secure their knowledge. This means that some pupils do not acquire the foundational knowledge and understanding they need prior to commencing their key stage 4 studies. The school should ensure that it further develops the key stage 3 curriculum in these subjects so that pupils gain the depth of knowledge they need.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent, particularly at key stage 3 and 4. Sometimes, teachers move on to new learning without systematically checking pupils' understanding. At other times, teaching does not extend and deepen pupils' learning. This results in some pupils not achieving well. The school should ensure that it provides teachers with the professional development they need, in both pedagogy and pedagogical content knowledge, to secure a deep and coherent body of knowledge for all pupils.
- Levels of persistent absence are high. This means that some pupils miss out on too much of their education, have gaps in their knowledge and do not achieve well. The school should continue to focus on reducing levels of persistent absence so that more pupils benefit from the school's recent curriculum changes.

## 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>	135423
<b>Local authority</b>	Newcastle upon Tyne
<b>Inspection number</b>	10297348
<b>Type of school</b>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<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>	1473
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	144
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Susanna Victoria Kempe
<b>Principal</b>	James Andriot
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://excelsior.laidlawschoolstrust.co.uk">https://excelsior.laidlawschoolstrust.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	10 and 11 March 2020

## Information about this school

- The school is part of The Laidlaw Schools Trust.
- The school uses four registered alternative providers and eight 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 inspector(s) 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.
- 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.
- The inspectors met with the principal, the head of primary, trust directors of primary and secondary school improvement, the chief executive officer of the trust, the chair of the board of trustees and with trustees and members of the local governing body.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, mathematics, history, science, and physical education. 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.
- Inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work in art and design, religious education, food technology, business studies and geography. They spoke to some pupils about what they had learned across a range of subjects including geography, Spanish and business studies.
- Inspectors visited sixth form lessons in criminology, information technology and health and social care.
- Inspectors met with additional groups of pupils, with regard to behaviour and attitudes and personal development.
- An inspector visited one of the unregistered providers of alternative provision used by the school.
- 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 pupil survey, staff survey, and to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View.

## Inspection team

Ian Rawstorne, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Bernard Senier	Ofsted Inspector
Jill Bowe	Ofsted Inspector
Phil Scott	Ofsted Inspector
Victoria James	Ofsted Inspector

Lindsay Oyston

Ofsted Inspector



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