

Inspection of Bishop Barrington Academy

Woodhouse Lane, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL14 6LA

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 June 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Grant Sowerby. This school is part of Advance Learning Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Kelvin Simpson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alan Boddy.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Bishop Barrington Academy are welcoming. The school reinforces its high expectations when teaching pupils about the 'Barrington way'. Pupils learn the importance of making positive choices in their behaviour and learning. This is reflected in pupils' positive conduct. Incidents of poor behaviour have significantly reduced and are infrequent. Consequently, pupils learn effectively and enjoy playing in the company of peers.

The school provides pupils with a comprehensive range of opportunities to enrich their education. Leaders have adjusted the timings of the school day to make sure that these are accessible to all pupils. The variety of clubs available, such as mindfulness, craft club and sports clubs, interest a wide range of pupils. Many pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, have made use of the school's new lunchtime clubs and activities.

The school supports pupils to become positive members of the local community. Pupils visit local places of cultural significance, such as Auckland castle, to learn about the history of the area. Some pupils hold leadership responsibilities, such as on the school council, that enable them to positively impact the school community.

The school has high expectations for pupils' academic achievement. Many pupils realise these. Improvements in the quality of education provided by the school are benefitting pupils. Over time, pupils have not achieved as well as they should have by the end of key stage 4, including in national assessments.

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

Previous weaknesses in the school's curriculum failed to prepare pupils well for their next stages in education, employment or training. Leaders have identified and addressed these failings. Staff now have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. Leaders have redesigned and significantly strengthened the curriculum in all subjects. Pupils, especially in younger year groups, have an increasingly detailed understanding of the subjects that they learn. This strengthened understanding is not reflected in the school's published outcomes. The pupils represented in 2023 results were in Year 10 when the school opened. They did not fully benefit from these improvements.

Teachers are well-trained. They have strong knowledge of the subjects that they teach. The school has identified consistent and effective strategies to deliver the curriculum. Teachers ensure that pupils regularly revisit the most important content in each subject. This aids pupils' ability to recall this knowledge. Over time, pupils complete increasingly complex tasks and draw on what they have learned previously.

Many pupils have gaps in their knowledge as a result of previous weaknesses in the curriculum. The school makes regular checks on what pupils know. In the most

effective lessons, teachers use information from these checks to adapt their teaching well. In some lessons, teachers miss opportunities to use this information to close gaps in pupils' knowledge more quickly.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well-supported by the school. Staff understand the needs of these pupils well. The school provides these pupils with the additional support that they need to access its ambitious curriculum. Pupils with SEND achieve well. Pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read are identified quickly. Trained staff provide effective support that helps these pupils to catch up.

A small number of pupils access some of their education at alternative provisions. These pupils significantly benefit from attending these provisions and the additional opportunities that they would not otherwise access.

Too many pupils are regularly absent from school. They miss important learning. The school provides targeted support for families to address barriers to regular attendance. This is improving pupils' attendance, including for disadvantaged pupils. Further improvements are needed to ensure that all pupils benefit from the school's improved curriculum.

Pupils benefit from effective careers education and guidance. Events such as careers fairs provide pupils and parents with detailed information about the opportunities available to them. The school's strong work has resulted in a significant increase in the number of pupils progressing to appropriate education and training when they leave school.

Those with responsibility for governance, and the trust, know the school well. They provide effective scrutiny of the school's work. The trust's additional support has helped to make significant improvements to the school. Staff are united in their ambition to build further on these.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not use assessment information consistently well to adapt their teaching. In some lessons, gaps in pupils' knowledge are not addressed as quickly as they could be. The school should ensure that teachers routinely use information from assessment well to inform their teaching.
- Too many pupils continue to be regularly absent from school. These pupils miss important learning and develop gaps in their knowledge. The school should build

on its current effective approach to improving attendance to ensure that all pupils benefit from the improved quality of education that the school provides.

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	148706
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10323141
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	616
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Alan Boddy
CEO of the trust	Kelvin Simpson
Headteacher	Grant Sowerby
Website	www.bishopbarrington.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Advance Learning Partnership multi-academy trust.
- The school opened in September 2021 on the site of its predecessor school, Bishop Barrington School, a Sports with Mathematics College.
- The school hosts an additionally resourced provision for Durham local authority. The provision provides education for pupils with SEND. It specialises in support for autism.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through pupil premium funding is above the national average.
- The school uses two registered and five unregistered alternative provisions.
- 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.
- 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, 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 lead inspector met with members of the trust board, the local governing board and the trust's chief executive officer.
- The lead inspector also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with the headteacher. They also met with other senior and middle leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and personal development.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and physical education. For each deep dive, 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 spoke with pupils and reviewed samples of pupils work in geography.
- An inspector visited and spoke with leaders at a sample of the alternative provisions used by the school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation regarding the support pupils with SEND receive. They looked at the quality of the provision for pupils with SEND in lessons.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including minutes from governing board meetings as well as the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- Inspectors looked at a range of information regarding behaviour. They observed the behaviour of pupils in classrooms and at social times.
- The views of pupils and staff who responded to Ofsted's surveys were considered.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents through the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

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