

# Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Teesdale School and Sixth Form

Prospect Place, Barnard Castle DL12 8HH

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Inspection dates:

4 and 5 March 2025

## Outcome

Teesdale School and Sixth Form has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Hijab Zaheer. This school is part of North East 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, Lesley Powell, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Margaret Saxton. There is also an executive headteacher, Alex Hook, who is responsible for this school and one other.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Staff at Teesdale School and Sixth Form have high expectations. They are deeply committed to living out the school's vision for pupils to 'experience excellence, every day'. Pupils enjoy strong, positive relationships with staff. They appreciate that staff know them well, regularly recognise their achievements and value them as individuals.

Teachers are skilful at making learning interesting and accessible for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, pupils are committed and successful in their learning. They work hard and they achieve well, including in public examinations at the end of Year 11 and Year 13.

Pupils are very proud of their school. They are happy there. Their behaviour is excellent. As a result, they live out the 'Teesdale Way' successfully by being 'ready, respectful and safe'. The school is a productive, safe and purposeful place for pupils to learn. Lessons are typically free from distractions, and pupils demonstrate excellent manners. Pupils are polite, confident and welcoming to visitors. Sixth-form students are positive role models for younger pupils. They have a mature approach to their studies, and they take on extra responsibilities around school, such as helping out at lunchtime and with maintaining the school site.

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

Pupils, including those with SEND, study a broad curriculum that is planned meticulously and delivered consistently well. Staff have very strong subject knowledge. They use this expertly, to provide pupils with clear explanations. They are skilful in asking effective questions that challenge and deepen pupils' thinking. In sixth-form lessons, students are supported to become highly independent in their academic thinking and working.

The school assesses and identifies the needs of pupils with SEND accurately. Staff adapt the curriculum effectively using the detailed information they receive on individual pupils. This ensures that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND. As a result, pupils learn successfully and achieve highly.

Teachers use a range of strategies to accurately identify pupils' misconceptions. Pupils respond positively to the feedback they receive. For example, in English, students in the sixth form value the one-to-one support they get following assessments. In art and design, pupils' sketch books show how they develop their skills, precision and experimentation over time in light of the feedback they receive.

Reading is a priority in the school. The school quickly identifies pupils who need additional support with their reading. It puts in place an effective programme that helps pupils to catch up. This includes opportunities for peer support, where younger pupils regularly read aloud to older pupils. This develops their confidence, reading accuracy and fluency. Key stage 3 pupils appreciate that they get to read for pleasure during the school day and the opportunity to attend book club.

The school has high, uncompromising expectations for pupils' behaviour. This ensures that the school is calm, orderly and conducive to learning. There is a clear system for managing behaviour that pupils believe is fair. Rates of attendance are high.

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is planned and ordered with precision. Pupils learn about important topics such as healthy relationships, first aid and the dangers of vaping. Pupils value having access to a vast range of opportunities to explore their interests outside of the classroom. For example, pupils attend clubs in art, chess, performing arts and a range of sports. Pupils enjoy being part of the nature club and learning about botany, bats and bees. They develop their communication skills in debate club and through the trust-wide public speaking competitions. The school ensures that students in the sixth form develop a strong understanding of active citizenship. For example, they support in local care homes, in lessons in younger year groups and with the school show. The school organises a range of trips and visits that enrich pupils' learning and broaden their cultural understanding.

The school's careers programme is highly effective. Pupils learn about the world of work when they meet a range of employers, apprenticeship and training providers. Pupils visit a range of universities and workplaces. This ensures that pupils are well equipped to make informed, ambitious choices about their next steps in education or employment.

Leaders are skilled and unrelenting in their ambition for pupils. They have sustained high standards over time. Those responsible for governance know the school well. They both support and challenge school leaders. Currently, some parents and carers do not feel that the school communicates with them well, particularly when they raise concerns. Leaders are aware of this.

Staff appreciate that leaders prioritise their well-being. They are proud to work at the school and morale is high.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- The quality of communication from school to parents has been variable over time. This means that some parents feel that they are not as well informed as they could be about how the school is supporting their child's behaviour, academic progress or meeting their child's SEND need. Leaders should ensure that they continue to develop and embed strategies for communication so that parents are fully informed about their child's education.

## **Background**

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in June 2019.

## **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

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>                    | 144496   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                            | Durham   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                          | 10346695   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                             | Secondary  |
| <b>School category</b>                            | Academy sponsor-led  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                        | 11 to 18   |
| <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>        | 715  |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b> | 58   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                      | Board of trustees  |
| <b>Chair of trust</b>                             | Margaret Saxton  |
| <b>CEO of the trust</b>                           | Lesley Powell  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                                | Hijab Zaheer   |
| <b>Website</b>                                    | <a href="http://www.teesdaleschool.co.uk">www.teesdaleschool.co.uk</a> |
| <b>Dates of previous inspection</b>               | 18 and 19 June 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005         |

## Information about this school

- A very small number of pupils access alternative provision. The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- 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 evaluation 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 executive headteacher, headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with trustees and members of the governing academy council.
- Inspectors focused inspection activity on the following subjects: English, mathematics, art and design, history, science, design and technology and modern foreign languages. Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector 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.
- Throughout the inspection, inspectors met with groups of staff. They also considered the opinions expressed through Ofsted's online staff survey.
- The inspector took account of responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey and the free-text responses. They considered a number of other communications from parents which were shared with Ofsted.

### **Inspection team**

Dan McKeating, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Christina Jones

Ofsted Inspector

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