

Inspection of Benfield School

Benfield Road, Walkergate, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE6 4NU

Inspection dates:	7 and 8 May 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Anthony Martin. This school is part of NEAT Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Debi Bailey, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Anne McNall.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a warm and welcoming school, which emphasises the value of community. Pupils are happy and feel safe. They have positive relationships with staff and trust adults.

There have been several improvements to the behavioural culture of the school since the previous inspection. Most pupils now behave well in lessons and move around the school sensibly. However, some pupils continue to not fully engage with the school's behavioural expectations. Some pupils feel uncomfortable due to the behaviour of their peers. Most pupils attend school frequently, but some pupils miss too many lessons.

The school has high expectations of pupils' achievement. However, there remains more to do to ensure that pupils' academic experiences consistently match these expectations. Over time, outcomes in external examinations and assessments are well below national averages.

Pupils enjoy a range of extra-curricular opportunities, including badminton, cookery and chess as well as trips to universities and overseas visits to Spain and Holland. Pupils learn about different cultures through language festivals and culture days. Pupils are supported to build resilience and aspiration, for example, through transition programmes with the Newcastle United Foundation.

Pupils contribute to the leadership of the school. For example, pupil leaders have negotiated changes to the food offer available at lunchtime. They support local charities, such as food banks. This helps them to develop a sense of social responsibility.

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

The school has introduced an improved and more aspirational curriculum. These changes have been designed to improve the skills and knowledge that pupils need to progress to their next stage of education, training or employment. The school is working to further refine and embed these improvements.

Many lessons are structured to help pupils remember important knowledge. In these lessons, pupils learn new techniques, which are carefully modelled by teachers. For instance, in mathematics, pupils learn how to construct triangles by observing clear demonstrations. However, teaching techniques are not consistently well used. When teaching is less effective, pupils make less progress through the curriculum.

Pupils' outcomes in published examinations and assessments have been poor over time. However, the new curriculum is starting to show some impact. Where teaching is stronger, pupils are increasingly able to demonstrate their recall and understanding. Although this has resulted in some improvements to pupils' achievement, outcomes remain well below national averages. The school is committed to further improving pupils' outcomes as a matter of urgency.

Leaders have high ambition for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Their needs are accurately identified. Teachers have a clear understanding of pupils' needs. They make necessary adaptations in lessons to support pupils' ability to learn effectively. Pupils from the school's SEND resourced provisions are well integrated into all aspects of school life. They receive the support they need to access the curriculum. However, pupils with SEND experience the same variable teaching quality as their peers.

Reading is prioritised by the school. Pupils are encouraged to read and are provided with many opportunities to do so. Pupils who are weaker at reading are quickly identified. They receive effective intervention, which helps them to improve their reading skills.

The school's relational approach to behaviour has had a notable impact on pupil attitudes and the overall culture at the school. However, some pupils do not display the positive attitudes and behaviours of their peers. This includes some pupils who are frequently suspended and miss lessons as a result. The school has substantially improved the attendance of pupils. However, the proportion of pupils that are persistently absent is still significantly high. This continues to have impact on the outcomes that these pupils achieve in examinations and assessments.

Pupils receive an effective programme of personal development. Pupils learn how to keep themselves healthy, about relationships and the dangers of drugs and knife crime. Pupils can discuss the importance of fundamental British values. The school has improved the proportion of pupils moving on to positive destinations in education, employment or training.

The school has experienced some turbulence in staffing and leadership. This has delayed some aspects of curriculum improvement. The school is providing training and development opportunities to help staff, including those who lead aspects of the curriculum, to further secure necessary improvements. Most staff feel that leaders take their workload into account. Governors and trustees have a clear understanding of the school. They challenge and support leaders effectively.

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 curriculum implementation is inconsistent. Teachers are trained to use appropriate pedagogical strategies, but these are not consistently used in an effective manner. This slows the rate of progress that pupils make through the curriculum and hence the outcomes pupils achieve in exams and assessments. The school should

ensure that teaching strategies are consistently implemented across the curriculum and that outcomes for pupils in examinations and assessments significantly improve.

- Although overall attendance has improved, a high number of pupils, including some who are disadvantaged, remain persistently absent and miss a significant amount of their learning. This impacts negatively on their achievements, including in national examinations and assessments. The school continues to work with the community to ensure the rates of persistent absence, including for disadvantaged pupils, further improves.
- Despite a much-improved behavioural culture at the school, a number of pupils do not engage fully with the school's high behavioural expectations. This means that they do not routinely develop the behaviours they need to be successful and are at risk of repeated sanctions. The school should further refine the support and adaptations that these pupils receive so that behaviour continues to improve.
- Leadership of several curriculum areas is still developing. As such, some of the planned improvements to the quality of education are not benefitting pupils as rapidly as the school intends. The school should ensure that curriculum leaders are well trained and further supported to confidently deliver and monitor improvements to the quality of the curriculum in their subject areas.

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	144271
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10383499
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	917
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Anne McNall
CEO of the trust	Debi Bailey
Headteacher	Anthony Martin
Website	https://benfield.neat.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 June 2024, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses three registered and two unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school has two specially resourced units for pupils with SEND. One provision supports pupils with physical disabilities. The other provision supports pupils with autistic spectrum disorder.
- 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. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form

provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other leaders, staff and pupils. They met with governors and trustees. They met with the CEO.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, modern foreign languages, history and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors visited lessons and spoke to pupils about their learning in various other subjects.
- Inspectors observed and spoke with pupils at various times of the school day.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; considered the views of parents; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors evaluated responses from parents and carers to Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also evaluated the responses that staff and pupils made to Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

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