

Inspection of NCEA Duke's Secondary School

Academy Road, Ashington, Northumberland NE63 9FZ

Inspection dates: 3–4 March 2020

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils have made weak progress across the range of subjects they study for many years. New leaders are beginning to address this. They are in the process of revising the curriculum that pupils are taught to make it more ambitious and effective. They are introducing new approaches to help pupils recall important knowledge. Better support is in place for pupils who are falling behind. However, these initiatives are at an early stage of development.

Leaders support pupils' personal development well. They provide a programme that makes pupils aware of their well-being, safety and of the rights of others. Pupils receive effective careers education and guidance. They benefit from pastoral support that enhances their welfare.

Pupils' behaviour is beginning to improve. The majority of pupils focus on their learning well, although there remain a number of instances where learning can be interrupted by pupils' poor behaviour. Leaders are taking firmer action to address such behaviour. They are also promoting positive attitudes to learning. This is contributing to improvement.

Leaders take bullying seriously. Leaders say they do not tolerate behaviour that endangers the welfare of pupils. However, a number of pupils, who made their views known to inspectors, expressed concern over how effectively bullying was addressed. Overall, relationships between pupils and staff are positive.

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

Pupils do not achieve well enough. Leaders' planning and implementation of the curriculum have not enabled pupils to learn effectively. Teachers do not build on the knowledge and skills pupils have acquired at key stage 2. Some decisions, such as early examination entry for English Literature in Year 10, have limited pupils' achievement and their experience of the English curriculum. The progress made by disadvantaged pupils has been particularly weak. It shows a declining trend.

New leaders are beginning to put steps in place to stimulate improvement. They have started to build on what pupils already know from primary school. They are using knowledge organisers and 'recall' strategies in lessons to help pupils to remember more of what they have been taught. They are also providing additional support at key stage 3 and key stage 4 for pupils who need to catch up in English and mathematics. Staff have purchased text books and revision guides to further support pupils' learning. Many of these developments are fairly recent and some are not in place for all year groups. Curriculum plans at key stage 3 remain at a very early stage of development.

Leaders make sure that pupils complete their courses. They also check that pupils in alternative education are safe. This provision has reduced the risk of permanent

exclusion for these pupils. Some pupils on these courses follow a narrower range of subjects.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum for pupils' personal, social and emotional development is well planned. Teachers cover topics that pupils want to know more about, such as knife crime and financial independence. Leaders raise pupils' awareness of equality and the rights of refugees. They also make pupils aware of the dangers of all forms of radicalisation.

Leaders are introducing new approaches to improve pupils' behaviour and concentration. They are also using stronger sanctions, such as exclusion, for poor behaviour. These actions are leading to some improvement. However, behaviour remains variable. Leaders have been less successful in improving attendance. New strategies saw a marginal improvement in attendance in the autumn term. The absence and persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils, and of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), remains too high.

Teachers make sure that pupils with SEND can take part in lessons and activities. They liaise with external partners to provide additional support. Pupils with SEND typically access a broad curriculum. Leaders have made changes to provide more support for pupils' literacy and numeracy development.

Leaders support their staff with practical steps to manage workloads. They have reduced assessment burdens on staff. They are providing staff with better resources and training to implement the curriculum more effectively. Staff feel well supported by leaders. They feel that new leaders have ensured a more effective focus on school improvement. These approaches have not had time to become secure and consistent in their impact.

The quality of the curriculum in the sixth form has declined since the previous inspection. Pupils' weaker outcomes at key stage 4 have made it more difficult for pupils to achieve success in academic courses. Students' progress in vocational courses has been better. Leaders are reviewing the sixth-form curriculum to provide a stronger focus on vocational subjects. Pupils who have not reached grade 4 in English or mathematics have opportunities to improve their grades. Their success in this area is varied. Students benefit from careers education and guidance and work experience. This helps the majority of students to progress to sustained education or employment.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The members of the safeguarding team have a thorough awareness of safeguarding issues. They know their pupils and the risks they may face. They provide staff with regular training on safeguarding issues. The actions of the safeguarding team support the safety and welfare of pupils and families. They follow up any concerns over pupils' safety thoroughly. The safeguarding team works with other professionals to support pupils' welfare. Leaders make pupils aware of potential risks to their safety through assemblies and the

curriculum. Leaders carry out thorough checks on the suitability of adults working at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Weaknesses in the planning and implementation of the curriculum have led to pupils making inadequate progress across a wide range of subjects. The curriculum has not built on the knowledge and skills that pupils have acquired at primary school. Leaders need to strengthen curriculum planning so that pupils acquire secure knowledge and skills as they progress through each year group. Leaders also need to intensify the implementation of new teaching approaches to improve pupils' achievement.
- Disadvantaged pupils make much weaker progress than other pupils nationally. The curriculum does not address their learning needs effectively. Gaps in pupils' knowledge in subjects such as English have not been successfully addressed. Leaders have developed new plans to support disadvantaged pupils. These need to be implemented consistently in order to improve achievement for disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour remains variable. Leaders are introducing clearer behaviour systems with stronger sanctions. The majority of pupils focus on their learning. There remain occasions where learning can be interrupted. Leaders say that they will not tolerate bullying or threatening behaviour. However, a significant number of pupils, who made their views known to inspectors, expressed concern over how well bullying is addressed. Leaders need to apply new behaviour approaches to consistent effect so that pupils' behaviour improves further.
- Pupils' attendance is not improving quickly enough. The absence of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND is too high. New attendance strategies have not been fully implemented. Leaders need to intensify the support and challenge they provide to pupils and families in order to improve attendance.
- Pupils' achievement has declined in the sixth form. This is particularly the case in academic A levels. Pupils have not developed sufficient knowledge and skills at key stage 4 to achieve well in academic courses. The academic curriculum has not been implemented effectively. Leaders need to review the sixth-form curriculum to ensure that students make better progress in programmes of study that meet their needs.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	135886
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10121712
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	951
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	115
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Brearley
Acting Principal	Ruston Atkinson
Website	http://www.ncea.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	17 December 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school became an 11 to 18 secondary school in July 2018. Before that, it functioned as an 'all-through' school with children and pupils aged 3 to 18.
- The church of England diocese of Newcastle is now the sole sponsor for the school.
- In April 2019, a new chief executive officer for the trust was appointed.
- An acting principal took up post in September 2019.
- The school has 12 pupils experiencing full-time alternative provision. Providers include Coysez in Bedlington, Educ8 in Ashington, Engage in Blyth, Skills for U in Cramlington and the Northumberland Pupil Referral Unit in Morpeth.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

It is recommended that the academy does not appoint newly qualified teachers.

- We held several discussions with the chief executive officer and the acting principal. We also talked to a wide range of staff, including curriculum leaders and pastoral staff.
- We looked in detail into the curriculum in English, mathematics, languages and geography. We talked to leaders and teachers about their curriculum plans. We also talked to pupils about what they knew and remembered in these subjects. We also looked at pupils' work and visited lessons.
- We talked to four members of the academy improvement board, including the chair of trustees, to find out how they supported and challenged school leaders.
- The lead inspector talked to the director and assistant directors of education for the diocese. He also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- We checked safeguarding arrangements. We looked at the school's work to make staff and pupils aware of safeguarding issues. We also looked at safeguarding records to see how concerns over pupils' safety were recorded and followed up. We also looked at the checks made on the suitability of staff working at the school.
- An inspector visited a selection of pupils attending some of the alternative providers used by the school.

Inspection team

Malcolm Kirtley, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Angela White	Ofsted Inspector
Shelley Heseltine	Ofsted Inspector
Sara Crawshaw	Ofsted Inspector

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