

Berwick Academy

Adams Drive, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland TD15 2JF

Inspection dates	26–27 January 2016
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Senior leaders have not made rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Middle leaders have only recently taken on responsibility for ensuring that teachers are accountable for the progress pupils make in their classes. As a result, outcomes are not high enough and the school continues to require improvement.
- Outcomes at GCSE have fallen since the previous inspection as a result of lower rates of progress in English and science.
- Attendance is below average and is not improving quickly enough.
- Leaders' use of the pupil premium funding has not been effective enough to secure sufficient improvements for disadvantaged pupils. The gaps in attainment and progress between these pupils and others are too wide and have not narrowed quickly enough.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are inconsistent. Teachers do not always ensure that pupils are fully on task. Some low-level disruption is present during lessons, and this hampers learning on occasions.
- Some pupils do the minimum work, rather than really getting involved in lessons.
- The sixth form requires improvement because of the variation in outcomes for learners.

The school has the following strengths

- Self-evaluation is accurate and leaders are clear about what needs to be done. Leaders are acting decisively to address historic weaknesses and improvements are beginning to bear fruit.
- As a result of the increasing effectiveness of leadership and management of the sixth form, outcomes for learners are improving quickly.
- Teaching in some subjects is good, for example in mathematics, design technology, art and childcare. Improvements are evident in history and geography.
- The school's work to ensure that pupils are safe is good. Pupils feel safe and know how to stay healthy.
- The alternative curriculum provided by the Eden Centre prepares pupils well for the next stage of education, training or employment.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
 - taking swift action to eradicate variation in pupils' performance
 - fully embedding the information systems that track pupils' achievement and personal development in order to spot, challenge and eradicate any underperformance more quickly
 - embedding the systems to check and improve the quality of teaching in the school
 - improving communication with parents
 - further strengthening middle leadership by ensuring they are fully accountable, and they in turn hold their teachers to account for the progress of the pupils in their classes.

- Improve the quality of teaching across the school so that it is consistently good in order to increase rates of pupils' progress, particularly in science and English, by:
 - ensuring a greater level of engagement from pupils in their learning by using activities that fire pupils' imagination, interest them and challenge them
 - raising expectations of what all pupils can achieve
 - ensuring that the quality of marking in the sixth form is consistent across different subjects
 - increasing the number of opportunities for pupils to write at length and in detail
 - identifying and focusing on the topics which the pupils find particularly difficult
 - improving the quality of questioning and the identification of any misconceptions the pupils may have, so that it is good in all subject areas
 - improving pupils' behaviour in lessons and successfully eradicating any low-level disruption that occurs.

- Improve the performance of disadvantaged pupils by ensuring that they come to school regularly and are given work that stimulates them and helps them meet their full potential.

- Improve attendance so that it is at least average and so that all pupils attend regularly.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The actions taken by leaders have not been fast enough to eradicate variation in pupils' performance and GCSE outcomes are too low. Leaders are well aware of the areas of weaknesses in the school. They are beginning to use appraisal and performance management well to challenge underperformance. However, the impact is limited so far.
- Middle leaders did not have enough accountability for the impact on the quality of teaching on the progress of pupils in their subject. They have recently been given increased accountability and support. They, in turn, feel more confident about supporting and challenging members of staff in their teams. Their impact on pupils' progress is increasing. They know that they now need to hold their teachers fully to account for the progress of the pupils in their classes. They are positive about the direction of the school and are enthusiastic about its future.
- Arrangements to check and improve the quality of teaching are robust but have not been securely in place for long enough to eradicate the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. The senior team's judgement of the quality of teaching in different subject areas is accurate.
- The lack of specialists in English and science reduced the quality of teaching. Specialist teachers have been appointed in these subjects and the quality of teaching has improved.
- Leaders are providing training for all staff to enable the best teaching expertise to be shared. This is bringing about improvements in teaching.
- Leaders have strengthened the procedures for tracking pupils' achievement and their personal development and staff are spotting and challenging underperformance more quickly. This has begun to have an impact on pupils' progress.
- The school uses lesson time, tutor time and special days where the usual curriculum is suspended to deliver important messages about life in modern Britain. These include the dangers of radicalisation, the importance of tolerance and how to be a good citizen. The school promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils, and has evaluated where this is good and where improvements are needed.
- Revisions to the curriculum are helping to improve pupils' achievement. For example, the amount of time devoted to science for some pupils is changing, depending upon the course being followed. Although extra support is helping pupils to do better in English, opportunities for pupils to write at length and in detail are sometimes missed. An appropriate range of extra-curricular activities are on offer, specifically in music and sport.
- Additional money given to the school to support the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils is having some impact, but the progress of these pupils requires improvement. A review of the use of this additional money has taken place. School leaders agree that these pupils are making better progress but that the rate of improvement has been slow.
- Parents have mixed views about the effectiveness of the school. Inspectors agree with the parents that communication between the school and parents is variable, and there is room for improvement.
- The school and the local authority are working increasingly well together to ensure that the school improves and that pupils receive a good education.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are well informed and have a realistic understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the progress made by pupils. Members of the governing body take their role very seriously. They have sought advice about their own effectiveness and have changed some of their meeting structures accordingly. They have ensured that performance management, of both the headteacher and the rest of the teaching staff, is robust. Only teachers whose performance is strong are given financial reward.
 - Governors ensure that the school's finances are stable. They discharge their responsibility to ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and governors ensure that policies and procedures are in place to create a safe culture around the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- There is too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and, as a result, it requires improvement.
- Pupils and parents report that the variation in teaching is not necessarily subject-specific but that some teaching in lessons is better planned and delivered than others. Inspection evidence supports these views. The previous instability in staffing has had a detrimental impact on teaching and learning in some subjects. However, this issue is now largely resolved.
- In some lessons, pupils learn well. This is because teachers stand for 'no nonsense' from the pupils and have very high expectations of everyone. They focus on challenging pupils to improve their skills in the subject being studied. Planning is closely linked to examination specifications, and a range of activities are used to capture pupils' imagination. Questioning is purposeful and direct. Teachers notice when pupils do not grasp a concept and work hard to explain it so that all pupils understand. One such lesson, observed during the inspection, was an art lesson in Year 10.
- Effective teaching and learning is not evident everywhere. The quality of teachers' questioning is variable, as is the skill of identifying misconceptions and challenging pupils to grapple with areas of misunderstanding. Sometimes, teaching does not focus well enough on the topics which the pupils find particularly difficult, and tasks lack challenge. Not all teachers have high enough expectations of what all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, can achieve.
- Homework is used increasingly well to help challenge pupils to move forward in their learning.
- The school is developing its assessment procedures and the curriculum to mirror external examinations. Pupils are becoming more familiar with assessments which require them to retain more information, think deeply and write at length.
- Teaching is improving. Some of the weaker teaching, which led to inadequate results in some subjects in Year 11 in 2015, is no longer present in the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Policies and procedures designed to keep pupils safe are effective. Pupils know the importance of staying healthy, and say that they feel safe at the school.
- They understand different forms of bullying and discrimination, and say that if this does take place, adults at the school deal with it swiftly and effectively. The school uses an online platform that alerts teachers to any bullying that is reported and, as a result, action is taken.
- The curriculum gives due attention to issues of safety. Pupils are taught about the dangers of extremism, the importance of tolerance and other British values, and how to navigate issues of growing older. They understand the importance of being safe online, avoiding sexting and being alert when using social media.
- Pastoral support is strong in the school, and staff work well with external agencies in order to ensure pupils are safe and well cared for.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Significant numbers of pupils and parents informed inspectors that behaviour is not always good, and that sometimes it is not managed well. Inspection evidence supports these views.
- In some lessons, low-level disruption hampers progress. Sometimes, when working in groups, pupils drift off task and chat about other things.
- Many pupils are committed to their learning and concentrate well in class. However, others are overly passive and do not get involved in activities with much interest or enthusiasm.
- The majority of pupils behave well during breaks and lunchtimes. Most pupils are polite and follow the school dress code. Many are courteous to each other and to adults. Relationships between pupils and staff are generally positive. Pupils generally show respect for the school premises.
- Exclusions from the school are below national averages. The school works well with those whose behaviour is challenging. Pupils say that teachers are inconsistent in their use of consequences and achievement points.

- Levels of attendance are below average, including those for disadvantaged pupils. Attendance is improving, although the rate of improvement is too slow. Levels of persistent absenteeism are too high. Senior leaders are aware of this, and plans are in place to further improve attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- In 2015, the proportion of pupils attaining five good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, was lower than the national average because pupils have not been taught well enough in the past, notably in English. English remains a key subject requiring improvement. However, better progress is now evident due to stronger teaching and intensive monitoring of teaching and pupils' achievement by senior leaders. There are still some gaps in learning for pupils currently in Year 11. Additional programmes of support are in place to help these pupils make rapid progress ready for their GCSE examinations.
- Some opportunities for pupils to write at length and in detail are missed in different areas of the curriculum. This has also contributed to lower achievement in English.
- Pupils' progress in science has been hampered by a lack of permanent, high-quality teachers. In the past, many lessons have been covered by a succession of supply teachers, leading to a lack of continuity. Several parents in Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire noted issues linked to a lack of science teachers. However, better progress is evident now with a stronger teaching force.
- Current Year 11 are making good progress from their starting points in several subject areas, including mathematics, design and technology, art and childcare. Their progress in other subjects requires improvement.
- From their starting points, the progress of pupils in Year 11 in 2015 was inadequate due to weaker performance in English and science over time. The quality of teaching and leadership in these areas is stronger now and, as a result, progress is improving. The progress of many pupils in Year 9 and Year 10 is good across the curriculum, including history and geography.
- The most-able pupils make more progress than their peers. Many of these pupils are more engaged in their learning and respond well to advice from their teachers. However their achievement still requires improvement because expectations of what they are capable of achieving are still sometimes too low.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make at least as much progress as their classmates. Pupils who receive support to catch up make broadly average progress. The support they receive helps them with their learning.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not do as well as other pupils nationally. In 2015, the difference in attainment between disadvantaged pupils in the school and other pupils nationally remained wide. Too few achieved five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics. In some areas, their achievement improved from the previous year, for example they reached better standards in mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils currently at the school are beginning to catch up with their peers across the curriculum. However, outcomes still require improvement overall because they are not always given work that stimulates them or helps them meet their full potential. Some do not attend regularly enough to enable them to achieve well.
- Pupils who spend much of their time in the Eden Centre make good progress. The caring environment and well-matched programmes help them prepare well for the next stages in their education, employment or training.
- The majority of pupils continue into education, employment or training. Many continue with their education at the school. Pupils say that the information and guidance they are given when making plans for the future could be further improved. Inspectors agree with these views.

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- 16 to 19 study programmes require improvement because there is too much variation in the quality of teaching and in the progress learners make between subjects. Specifically, in 2015, the progress learners made from their starting points required improvement. The progress students made in academic subjects was stronger than in vocational ones. However, outcomes for learners are improving year on year. The quality of provision in the sixth form is improving rapidly.
- The leadership of the sixth form is increasingly effective. Learners are very appreciative of the support they receive, which is both supportive and challenging. The quality of teaching requires improvement in

the sixth form as too much variation in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment still exists. However, in a short period of time, the leadership of the sixth form has developed the curriculum and ensured that the quality of teaching is improving.

- The information, advice and guidance received by learners is good and, as a result, more and more learners are aspiring to continue with their studies, and a growing number are moving on to study at prestigious universities.
- Learners benefit from a variety of teaching styles in the sixth form, particularly in academic subjects. Much of this teaching observed in academic subjects was tailored to the needs of the class. Teachers question learners well to push their understanding further. They know where the learners' gaps in knowledge and skills lie, and plan meaningful lessons accordingly.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is good. Lessons are calm and purposeful. Sixth formers act as good role models for the rest of the pupils, and are courteous and mature. In lessons they concentrate hard and engage well in activities.
- Marking across the sixth form is variable, with feedback in some subjects more helpful and timely than in others.
- In discussions with inspectors, learners spoke warmly of the support they receive from teachers for any difficulties, both academic and social, they may be experiencing. They feel entirely safe in the school, and feel that their voice is heard. Relationships between teachers and learners are strong.

School details

Unique reference number	137598
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10002060

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	13–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	673
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	188
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Frame
Headteacher	Alexis Widdowson
Telephone number	01289 305083
Website	www.berwickacademy.co.uk
Email address	admin@berwickacademy.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 October 2013

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The number of pupils on roll has fallen in recent years.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage; very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- No pupils attend off-site provision. The Eden Centre, run by the school for its own pupils, provides alternative curriculum and courses for around 15 pupils who need extra support.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has had significant staffing turbulence, particularly in English and science.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons and groups of pupils working, and observed pupils at breaktime and when moving around the school. They talked to pupils in lessons and looked at work in their books. Inspectors talked to four specific groups of pupils about life in the school, the behaviour of pupils and the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors conducted joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher and discussed findings.
- Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body and the teaching staff, including middle and senior leaders. One inspector spoke to the academy improvement partner.
- Inspectors looked at the 85 responses to Parent View and considered pupils' responses to the questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the overall work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including the school's data about pupils' current progress. They also studied documents relating to safeguarding, governance, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors also looked at a range of other evidence, including displays, the school website and evidence representing the school's wider achievements beyond the classroom.

Inspection team

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