

Teesdale School and Sixth Form

Prospect Place, Barnard Castle DL12 8HH

Inspection dates

18–19 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Highly aspirational, determined and committed leadership has transformed Teesdale School and Sixth Form.
- The North East Learning Trust has brought its considerable capacity to bear. The trust has provided the financial and professional impetus needed to rapidly improve the school. The strategic oversight of trustees and the local academy council has been crucial.
- Outcomes for pupils are outstanding. They have improved rapidly since the school joined the trust. Last year, pupils made significantly more progress across a broad range of subjects than was seen nationally.
- Pupils currently in the school are making stronger progress still. They are aspirational, hard-working and committed to their studies. Attendance is above the national average.
- Pupils with lower starting points and with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make impressive progress because of the bespoke support and teaching they receive.
- The school's aspirational and well-planned curriculum is the bedrock of its success. Leaders have successfully broadened the curriculum, reintroduced subjects that had been lost and ensured that far more pupils are following challenging courses.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Excellent training and development opportunities coupled with precise feedback help teachers to skilfully deliver the curriculum. Just occasionally, some teachers' questioning does not challenge pupils to think deeply enough.
- Pupils show highly positive attitudes. They take pride in their work and diligently complete homework tasks. Some younger pupils are less confident to answer questions fully.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. The use of exclusions is low and is falling. Bullying is rare. Records show few incidents of unkindness because the vast majority of pupils are respectful and tolerant.
- Pupils feel safe. Work done to support pupils' personal development is comprehensive. The wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities available ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered highly effectively.
- The sixth form has been transformed. Students currently following 16 to 19 study programmes receive an outstanding quality of education. A few students have not had an appropriate work experience. Despite this, all students progressed into higher education, employment or training last year.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further refine the quality of teaching and learning, by:
 - improving some teachers' questioning skills and developing younger pupils' confidence to give well-articulated and well-reasoned answers.
- Further strengthen the quality of 16 to 19 study programmes by ensuring that as many students as possible undertake appropriate work experience that supports their next steps after the sixth form.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The rapid improvement in Teesdale School and Sixth Form has been typified by relentless and tenacious leadership. The executive headteacher, by modelling her expectations from the start, has created a deeply aspirational culture, embedding high expectations across the school.
- The considerable capacity within the North East Learning Trust has also contributed significantly to the pace of improvement. The trust has invested heavily in the infrastructure, generously provided expertise and implemented leadership systems that have rapidly improved the school's effectiveness.
- The school site is now safe, bright and welcoming. New fencing has been installed around the perimeter, classrooms have been refurbished and repainted, information technology systems have been renewed and walls have been decorated with inspirational imagery. This investment has improved the environment considerably and instilled within the staff and pupils a genuine pride in the school.
- Underpinning the rapid improvement in outcomes is the quality of the curriculum. Subjects that the predecessor school had lost, such as religious education, design and technology, food studies and photography, have been reintroduced. Music education has been reinvigorated. The subject of land-based studies has been introduced at key stage 4, in conjunction with a further education college, to meet pupil demand. The ambition of leaders is reflected in the introduction of two languages at key stage 3 and all pupils following separate qualifications in chemistry, physics and biology at key stage 4. Currently, three quarters of pupils now follow the suite of subjects in the English Baccalaureate. The ambitious curriculum is also very well planned. Leaders have ensured that subject content is carefully considered, challenging and introduced progressively.
- Leaders monitor the school's performance relentlessly. They gather a wealth of information so that they can check on the effect of their actions. This information supports their thorough and accurate self-evaluation. Their two-year improvement plan has proved an effective strategic tool for transforming the school.
- Leaders make good use of additional funding. The pupil premium is used to ensure that barriers to learning faced by disadvantaged pupils are systematically removed. Teachers know who the disadvantaged pupils are and work hard to prevent them from falling behind. Similarly, provision for pupils with SEND is led and managed very well. Pupils' needs are quickly identified, and appropriate support is provided.
- Pupils who enter the school with lower standards of attainment receive highly personalised and bespoke support. This support helps them to catch up quickly with their peers. Year 7 catch-up funding is therefore being used highly effectively. Leaders' commitment to equality and diversity is clear to see. Their determination to meet the needs of the more vulnerable, including the disadvantaged, those with SEND and lower attainers ensures that these groups make strong and sustained progress.
- Senior leaders are adept at developing and getting the best from their teaching staff. They check on their performance rigorously and provide them with detailed feedback

each term. They provide excellent professional development opportunities, drawing upon the expertise within the trust, as required. The staff have excellent opportunities to work with colleagues in other trust schools and to contribute to the wider development of the trust. Senior leaders are skilled in identifying and developing members of staff with leadership potential. Every member of staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey said they felt the school had improved since it joined the trust

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered particularly well. Leaders expect the highest standards of social behaviour. The wide range of enrichment activities, links with charities and visits out of school make a significant contribution to pupils' social and cultural awareness.

Governance of the school

- The board of trustees provides excellent strategic oversight. Trustees' comprehensive understanding of the school is informed by the work of the high-calibre local academy council.
- The trustees provide excellent financial oversight. They have invested heavily in the school and have generously provided expertise from within the trust. Their strategic oversight has enabled the school to improve rapidly.
- Local academy council members are experienced in school improvement and bring a range of professional skills from across the educational landscape. They systematically check on the school's performance, providing a highly effective balance of support and challenge. Collectively, they provide real clarity of vision and direction.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Trust leaders undertook a robust audit of safeguarding arrangements as soon as they began their sponsorship of the school. Weaknesses in site security were quickly addressed.
- Leaders ensure that all necessary checks are completed on staff who work in or visit the school. Vetting systems are exemplary.
- Staff training is fully up to date. Consequently, members of staff know how to respond if they identify any concerns, including concerns about extremism or radicalisation. The culture in the school is highly vigilant. The designated safeguarding leader and the executive headteacher continually check and refine safeguarding procedures.
- Leaders work closely with a range of agencies to protect pupils at risk. Records show they make referrals to social services in a timely manner and manage risks carefully, in conjunction with the police and charitable organisations. Many parents who responded to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, said that they had been impressed with the level of care and support shown by senior leaders for their child.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently strong. Consequently, pupils in each year group are making rapid progress.

- Teachers ensure that the work they provide progressively deepens pupils' understanding. Typically, subject content taught is stretching. In key stage 3, there is no repetition of content covered in primary schools. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and are skilled at explaining and demonstrating. The tangible work ethic, typical in classrooms, ensures that pupils listen intently, ask questions and actively engage with new subject knowledge. Pupils are not fazed when challenging new content is presented to them, because they trust their teachers to guide them through it.
- Teachers systematically revisit important subject knowledge to help pupils retain key information in their memory. Inspectors found most pupils could recall information covered in previous topics. However, some younger pupils were less confident or less able to articulate clearly their grasp of topics they had studied.
- Most teachers use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding. Consequently, they know when to recap and when to move the learning on. Good ongoing assessment means that teachers ensure that learning progresses at pace. Many teachers also use questioning to extend pupils' thinking, although, occasionally, some do not ask sufficiently testing questions and allow pupils to give less well-considered answers.
- Teachers regularly set homework, in line with the published homework timetable. Leaders systematically track whether homework is completed and handed in on time. Tracking data shows 99% of homework is completed. Analysis of homework tasks shows teachers use homework thoughtfully to reinforce and consolidate learning covered in class. While leaders have high expectations for the completion of homework, they are aware of seasonal workloads within the rural community. For example, homework was suspended during the lambing season, as so many pupils were tired from their farm work.
- Teachers have high expectations and require work to be presented to a high standard. As a result, pupils are diligent and take the upmost care with their work. Pupils are highly productive and cover topics in depth and detail. Their books provide an excellent source from which to revise.
- High-quality support is provided for pupils with SEND by additional adults. Pupils engage readily with the extra help provided for them. Consequently, they make rapid progress and are supported to access the full curriculum offer.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils show very positive attitudes. The aspirational culture engendered in the school ensures that pupils work hard and apply themselves consistently. Pupils are proud of their work and of their achievements.
- The programme of learning designed to support pupils' personal, social, health and economic development is wide-ranging and highly effective. The school makes excellent use of external providers to enrich the curriculum. Tutorial time systematically

delivers a programme of learning about personal safety. For example, the 'monopoly board' programme covers topics about child sexual exploitation, extremism and online safety. Consequently, pupils feel safe and well prepared for adult life. The content of assemblies and focused curriculum days allows some of these issues to be explored in greater depth. The programme also covers topics such as democracy and the rule of law and facilitates discussion about different cultures. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

- There is a comprehensive programme of careers information and guidance. Pupils receive good information about GCSE options and about the possible routes they can take after key stage 4. There is a lively programme of visits to employers and to universities. The school actively works with a range of agencies to raise awareness about opportunities in different employment sectors. For example, during the inspection, a team of National Health Service staff were visiting the school promoting careers in the health sector through lively and interactive workshops.
- The school's pastoral system is a real strength. Pupils feel well supported and cared for. They understand implicitly the school's expectations for behaviour and conduct. Pupils feel able to talk to pastoral leaders or tutors if they have any concerns. Pupils who find school more challenging are helped and supported to be successful. Leaders were quick to identify the challenges some pupils face through isolation and economic deprivation in a dispersed rural community. Consequently, they have sourced and made available the professional counselling services needed.
- The school provides a rich programme of extra-curricular opportunities. There is a wide range of sports clubs available and members of the physical education department organise games sessions at lunchtime. There is a choir, a chamber choir and an orchestra. Performing arts clubs and the design and technology club are well attended.
- Pupils also have good opportunities to represent the school. There are elected tutor group representatives, sports representatives and school ambassadors. Leaders have ensured that the school's disadvantaged pupils are well represented in these roles. These opportunities provide a well-considered system for developing pupil leadership potential.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Conduct in lessons is impeccable. Most lessons include a period of silent working, which is fully respected. As pupils progress through the school, they grow in confidence and are keen to participate in discussions or to answer questions. Pupils told inspectors that their teachers expect a lot of them, so they are keen to attend well and try their best.
- At social times, pupils consistently follow behaviour expectations. For example, in the dining hall they queue in an orderly and patient manner and tidy away after eating. Members of the kitchen staff are treated respectfully. Teachers and pupils sit and eat together. Relationships between the staff and pupils are friendly and respectful. Many pupils take up the opportunity to continue their studies or attend homework club at lunchtime.
- Leaders track the use of behaviour sanctions rigorously. Records show a steady decline in the issuing of sanctions. In recent weeks, no sanctions have been issued at all on

several days. The excellent behaviour of pupils is reflected in the low and declining level of exclusion.

- The overall level of attendance is above the national average for similar schools. The level of attendance is improving over time, as pupils increasingly value their education. Leaders firmly challenge families of children who are persistently absent from school. As a result, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is below that seen nationally and is continuing to fall.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils enter the school with standards of attainment in English and mathematics that are a little above those seen nationally. The school's curriculum ensures a seamless transition into new areas of learning. Consistently strong teaching ensures that they make rapid and sustained progress across each phase of the school. By the end of key stage 4, standards of attainment are well above those seen nationally.
- In 2018, pupils who completed key stage 4 had made significantly more progress across a broad range of subjects than seen nationally. A high proportion of pupils attained a GCSE grade A* to C in both English and mathematics. Standards of attainment across other subjects were consistently high.
- Last year, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils was well above that of other pupils nationally.
- The progress being made by pupils currently in the school is improving further. Pupils are highly productive in lessons and through the work they complete at home. Evidence from their workbooks shows they are making rapid and sustained progress through the challenging content taught in each subject area. There is a tangible work ethic evident across the school.
- Rates of progress are consistently strong across different groups of pupils and across the age range. Disadvantaged pupils currently in the school typically make as much or more progress than other pupils. The school's assessment information and the evidence in pupils' workbooks show that the most rapid progress is being made by pupils who entered the school with lower attainment and pupils with SEND. The quality of additional support they receive is closely tailored to meet their needs and has a considerable impact on their learning. As a result, these pupils are catching up with others in the school.
- In 2018, around one in five pupils attained a strong pass in the English Baccalaureate. While this was above the national average, leaders are ambitious to improve further and have acted quickly to strengthen provision in modern foreign languages. The proportion of pupils following the suite of subjects within the English Baccalaureate is rising. There is an excellent range of opportunities for the most able pupils to excel. For example, inspectors visited the design and technology lunchtime club where enthusiastic pupils were pursuing advanced engineering projects. Published performance data from 2018 shows the most able pupils made rapid and sustained progress across the curriculum. The most able pupils currently in the school are continuing to excel.

- The school promotes reading effectively. Lower-attaining readers get strong support to get them back on track. Reading opportunities are integrated into many lessons and are carefully structured into tutorial time. The school has an active book club and a love of reading is promoted through a flourishing young journalist club. The English department ensures that pupils are introduced to a carefully selected range of historical and modern quality texts.
- High aspiration, coupled with excellent careers guidance, saw almost all pupils move into further education, employment or training at the end of key stage 4.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- Strong and determined leadership has ensured rapid improvements in the quality of sixth form provision. Students currently in the sixth form are receiving an excellent education. As a result, they are ambitious, aspirational and determined to excel. Sixth-form students provide admirable role models for others in the school.
- When the trust took control of the school in 2016, sixth-form provision was poor, and the sixth form was at risk of closure. Relatively few students chose to follow 16 to 19 study programmes. Many of those who did had been accepted onto courses without the underpinning qualifications needed for success. Since then, the trust has invested in improving facilities and broadening the curriculum offer. Leaders have overhauled the content of study programmes, revitalised the curriculum and have significantly strengthened the quality of teaching.
- In 2018, the trust's first cohort of students completed their study programmes. They made broadly average progress and attained standards in line with the national average. All these students progressed into education, employment or training. These outcomes represented considerable success, given the weak infrastructure in place when students began their study programmes.
- Standards have risen rapidly and students currently in the sixth form are achieving highly. They work hard and maintain their files and folders meticulously. Students benefit from small-group teaching that is highly personalised. Inspectors found that students were mature, aspirational and committed to fulfilling their potential. Their very positive level of attendance and punctuality to lessons reflects this.
- Relatively few students now begin study programmes without a good GCSE pass in English or mathematics. Those who do receive additional one-to-one teaching. Most successfully attain a good pass at the first attempt when resitting the examination.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is consistently strong. The curriculum in each subject ensures that new knowledge is introduced progressively and in a well-considered sequence. Teachers ensure that students steadily increase their understanding of subject content by regularly revisiting and recalling essential knowledge. Students have online access to a rich bank of supportive information. They use their non-contact time well to advance their studies.
- There is also a well-planned careers programme which starts in the autumn term of Year 12. Students receive good information about the range of opportunities available to them, including apprenticeships. Help with university applications is highly effective.

Many students undertake volunteering roles. Most but not all students undertake appropriate work experience as part of the study programme.

- Leaders ensure that students receive highly suitable support for their personal development. Age-appropriate safety issues, such as safe driving, alcohol and substance abuse and sex education are covered in tutorial time or focused curriculum days. Students also have access to a broad programme of enrichment activities. For example, some students visited Auschwitz as part of Holocaust Memorial Day and some visited Athens through an astronomy-based Erasmus project. Students have also visited the European parliament, and many have been involved in subject-based competitions or campaigns with a social conscience.
- Last year, all students who applied to university secured their place. Around 40% went on to study at Russell Group universities. Most students this year have applied for university places on competitive and demanding courses.

School details

Unique reference number	144496
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10087497

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	574
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	74
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Suzanne Duncan
Executive headteacher	Janice Gorchach
Telephone number	01833 638166
Website	www.teesdaleschool.co.uk
Email address	office@teesdaleschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Teesdale School and Sixth Form became an academy on 1 September 2016. It is sponsored by the North East Learning Trust. The governance of the school is overseen by a board of trustees with most day-to-day responsibilities for governance managed by the school's local academy council.
- Teesdale School and Sixth Form is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most pupils are White British. Few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and very few pupils speak English as an additional language.

- A below average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium.
- There is a below-average proportion of pupils with SEND. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is also below average.
- The school does not use any alternative education providers.
- The North East Learning Trust has provided a considerable amount of support, including financial investment and the allocation of an executive headteacher.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, head of school and other senior leaders, a group of subject leaders and a group of teachers.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the board of trustees, the chair, vice-chair and other members of the local academy council and the chief executive of the North East Learning Trust.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from key stages 3 and 4 and a group of sixth form students. Inspectors also spoke to other pupils more informally at social times.
- An inspector listened to some Year 7 pupils read and discussed their interest in books with them.
- Inspectors visited lessons across each phase of the school, including the sixth form. Some observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. During lesson visits inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and sampled a range of pupils' workbooks.
- An inspector met with the SENCo and together they visited lessons and talked to pupils to evaluate the quality of provision for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors scrutinised a sample of pupils' books from Years 9 to 11. The sample of books included pupils who entered the school with different starting points, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, policies, assessment information, records of governors' meetings and records of checks made on the quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors also looked at records of attendance and behaviour and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors took account of the 114 responses to Ofsted's parent questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, the inspectors took account of the 61 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Chris Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Joanne Owens

Ofsted Inspector

Janet Gabanski

Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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