

Inspection of Wyvern Academy

Eggleston View, Darlington, County Durham DL3 9SH

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 June 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have achieved their ambitious vision of giving this community the school it deserves. Wyvern Academy is a place where pupils are happy, safe and learn well. Leaders have fostered a culture of celebration and recognition. Pupils' 'wonderful work' is celebrated weekly and pupils are rightly proud of their achievements. Most pupils are engaged in lessons and keen to learn.

In this small school, staff know pupils well. There are strong and respectful relationships evident throughout school. Pupils feel that adults care about them. Pupils also explain that school is a welcoming place, where everyone is valued. They do not feel that bullying is a problem. If it occurs, staff take it seriously and deal with it.

Leaders want pupils to have a wide range of experiences. The extra-curricular offer aims to ensure there is something to appeal to everyone, from digital gaming and 'critter club' to a range of sports and gardening. Pupils learn about how to take care of their mental health and promote well-being. Leaders have carefully considered how to develop pupils' resilience. Pupils are being prepared to succeed in life.

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

Leaders have clearly focused on improving the quality of education in school. Pupils now have access to a broad and ambitious curriculum. Leaders are committed to providing pupils with an education that sets them up to achieve well in later life. Pupils have free choice when they select their GCSE options. An increasing number of pupils are choosing to study languages at key stage 4.

Leaders have considered carefully what pupils will learn. They ensure that pupils are able to build the knowledge they need over time. Across all subjects, leaders have prioritised teaching vocabulary. This work is beginning to have a notable impact on how well pupils can articulate themselves and explain their learning.

Leaders have designed the curriculum so that it is aspirational for all pupils. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have been at the heart of decision-making around curriculum design. Leaders make sure that teachers have precise and focused information about how best to support pupils with SEND in lessons. Teachers are using this information effectively so that pupils with SEND achieve well.

Teachers across the school use the same structure to lessons. This ensures that pupils get regular chances to recall their prior learning, and teachers can check what pupils remember. In most classes, this structure is being used to good effect. In some classes, teachers are not delivering the curriculum as effectively. Occasionally, tasks do not take account of pupils' starting points. Sometimes, teachers do not routinely recognise where there are gaps in pupils' knowledge.

Leaders have thought carefully about how to embed reading through all aspects of school. Pupils read independently every day. The library has been extensively restocked and is now a thriving space where pupils enjoy reading. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about the books they received from school at Christmas. Pupils who find reading more difficult are supported to help them catch up.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. All teachers and pupils understand the expectations around behaviour. The vast majority of pupils meet these expectations. If pupils do not make the right choices, they are supported by staff to help them do so in the future.

Leaders make sure that the curriculum to promote pupils' personal development is given the same priority as other curriculum subjects. Pupils are given a range of careers information and experiences to help them make the right choices about their futures. Pupils understand the importance of tolerance and respect. They explain that people treat each other fairly in school. Pupils are confident that difference is respected. However, pupils' understanding of other faiths is less secure.

Staff are proud and happy to work at this school. They are keen to 'roll up their sleeves' and work hard. They are committed to leaders' vision of securing the best life chances for pupils in their community. Staff are confident that leaders value their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding is a priority in school. There are a large number of staff who are trained to act as safeguarding leads. This means that there is good capacity for leaders to deal with concerns as they arise. All pupils identify a named teacher as their trusted adult. Pupils are confident that they always have someone to talk to.

Staff are clear that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. They are well trained in what signs to look out for. They know how to report any concerns, and frequently do. Safeguarding records show that staff are vigilant to pupils' well-being. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is some variability in how well the curriculum is taught. Some teachers do not check systematically what pupils know and understand in lessons. Some tasks do not take account of pupils' starting points. This makes it more difficult for some pupils to have a secure understanding of curriculum content. Leaders

should ensure that teachers check what pupils know and can remember and that teaching is consistently effective across all classes.

- Pupils do not have a secure understanding of different faiths and religions. This means that their understanding of tolerance and respect is not underpinned by knowledge. Leaders should ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to develop a secure understanding of different faiths and religions.

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](#)' 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	143845
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10290318
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	455
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Martin Fleetwood
Headteacher	Owen Inglis
Website	http://wyvernacademy.org/
Date of previous inspection	12 and 13 November 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision. Two providers are registered and two providers are unregistered.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with a range of senior leaders, including the headteacher and deputy headteacher. They also met with a range of trust staff, including the chief executive officer. An inspector also spoke with the chair and vice chair of the trust by telephone. An inspector met with representatives from the school improvement board and the local academy board, including the chair.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, history, art, design technology, physical education and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met

with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.

- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about other subjects.
- The lead inspector spoke with the external school improvement partner by telephone.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for safeguarding. They checked logs of actions taken to keep pupils safe.
- An inspector checked the single central record and other documentation regarding safe recruitment practices.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of pupils and staff, both formally and informally, during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils at social times.
- An inspector visited an unregistered alternative provision.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for personal development and careers.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including minutes of school improvement board meetings, the school's self-evaluation and development plan. They also looked at external reviews from the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online staff and pupil questionnaire. They also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Inspectors also considered additional communications from parents.

Inspection team

Katie Spurr, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Chris Carr	His Majesty's Inspector
Jacqui Johnson	Ofsted Inspector
Bernard Clark	Ofsted Inspector

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