

Inspection of Hurworth School

Croft Road, Hurworth-on-Tees, Darlington, County Durham DL2 2JG

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 September 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel safe and happy at Hurworth School. In this school, staff know pupils well. Strong relationships between staff and pupils are evident across the school. Year 7 pupils explain that they have been helped to settle in quickly. Leaders make sure that pupils understand the importance of respect. They encourage pupils to make positive choices and think about the consequences of their actions. Staff are proud to work here. They describe the school as a tight-knit community.

Pupils get clear messages about bullying. They understand it is not acceptable. Pupils who have been bullied say that teachers dealt with it quickly. They believe teachers take bullying seriously. The majority of pupils do not feel that bullying is a problem at this school.

Leaders are passionate about providing an education that prepares all pupils well for life. They are ambitious for what they want pupils to learn. Leaders are re-introducing enrichment activities to broaden pupils' experiences. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who attend the specially resourced provision are integrated well into mainstream lessons. Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND gain the knowledge they need to succeed.

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

Leaders have made careful decisions about their curriculum. The content that subject leaders have chosen is ambitious. In each subject area, leaders make sure that all pupils learn the same ambitious content. Leaders have decided what knowledge is most important and organised it logically. Leaders make sure that pupils can build on what they already know. Teachers use 'unlock' and 'lock' tasks in each lesson to make sure that pupils have remembered the most important knowledge. 'Unlock' tasks remind them of what they have learned before and 'lock' tasks are used to secure new learning.

In lessons, the majority of teachers explain content clearly and use questioning effectively. Teachers use a range of strategies to uncover gaps in pupils' understanding. In most lessons, activities are well designed to help pupils to secure their understanding. Pupils with SEND are well supported by staff to succeed. Staff understand these pupils' needs well. Leaders make sure that pupils in the specially resourced provision receive tailored additional support to help them succeed.

Leaders have begun to develop a whole-school approach to reading. There is support in place for struggling readers. However, this is in its early stages. Leaders have clear plans for how to develop this provision further, including additional staff training. Leaders have also begun to consider how best to support pupils' reading within subject areas. This work is also in its infancy.

Leaders have made standards of behaviour a priority in recent years as pupils returned to school following periods of national lockdown. Leaders are in the process of introducing a new behaviour policy to re-establish their high expectations. Pupils' behaviour is generally calm and orderly around the school site. In some classrooms, pupils were keen and interested in their learning. However, other pupils seemed less engaged in their learning. Some staff have different expectations of pupils' behaviour and involvement. Pupils and parents confirm that behaviour is managed differently by some staff.

Leaders ensure that pupils get high-quality information about their next steps after school. Leaders provide careers advice which is impartial and personalised. Pupils with SEND are given additional support to ensure that they make the right choices. Leaders are very successful in ensuring that all pupils have a secure destination when they leave school. Older pupils really value this support.

Leaders have constructed a detailed personal, social and health education curriculum. Leaders have recently adapted how and when these lessons are taught to give them more priority. Staff have been trained in how to deliver this content effectively. Leaders reinforce the '4 Rs': respect, responsibility, resilience and relationships. Pupils are encouraged to demonstrate these values. They learn about online safety and how to manage their mental health. A few older pupils feel that these messages could be delivered in more depth.

Trustees and governors are well informed about the school's priorities. They understand their role in the school's journey clearly. Leaders at all levels are reflective and open. Staff from across the school feel extremely well supported by leaders. They feel their well-being is considered. They describe a supportive and close-knit community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff are very clear about the risks that pupils might face. Staff understand what signs to look out for and how to report them. Staff believe that keeping pupils safe is everyone's responsibility. Logs and records seen by inspectors demonstrate that staff are vigilant. Members of staff report any worries swiftly. Pupils feel safe in school and have trusted adults.

Leaders work with a range of external agencies to make sure that vulnerable pupils and their families get the support they need. Leaders are persistent in making sure that this happens. Vulnerable pupils are monitored carefully to keep them safe in school. Leaders keep detailed logs of actions taken to keep pupils safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The reading curriculum is still in its early stages. Provision for struggling readers is under development. Some pupils do not read widely and often. Leaders should ensure that plans to further develop their reading provision are securely embedded.
- Some staff have higher expectations of pupils' behaviour and participation than others. Leaders have recently introduced a new behaviour policy. Leaders should embed high expectations of the new behaviour policy so that pupils are more consistently actively engaged in their learning.
- Leaders have introduced a range of new policies and systems in school, including a new behaviour policy and provision for reading. Leaders have not had the opportunity to fully evaluate the impact of these changes. Leaders should ensure they have robust procedures in place to check the impact of their new initiatives.

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	136525
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10228977
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	680
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Derek Bell
Headteacher	Rachel Somerville
Website	www.hurworthschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 April 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND. This provision currently accommodates 14 pupils with autism spectrum disorder.
- The school currently uses two registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Hurworth School under section 5 of the Education Act. However, Ofsted previously judged Hurworth School to be outstanding, before it opened as Hurworth School as a result of conversion to academy status. That 'outstanding' grade reflected Hurworth School's overall effectiveness in April 2008 under the relevant inspection framework at that time. The judgement of 'good' reflects the overall effectiveness of Hurworth School under the current inspection framework.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the chief executive officer and the headteacher during the inspection. They also met with a range of other senior and middle leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding, personal development, reading, careers and numeracy.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: history, English, science and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also met with the SEND coordinator and the resource base manager. They looked at a range of documentation regarding the support these pupils receive. Inspectors looked at the quality of the provision for pupils with SEND in lessons.
- Inspectors met with the designated lead for safeguarding. They checked records of actions taken by leaders to keep pupils safe. Inspectors scrutinised the single central record.
- Inspectors spoke with a wide range of pupils and staff, formally and informally, over the course of the inspection about the safeguarding culture in school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including minutes from local governing body meetings and the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- Inspectors met with representatives from the trust, including the chair of the trust. They also met with members of the governing body, including the chair and vice chair.
- Inspectors looked at a range of information regarding behaviour and attendance. They spoke to pupils who had been subject to sanctions.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils at social times.
- Inspectors visited lessons for personal, social and health education.
- Inspectors met with single-sex groups of pupils.

Inspection team

Katie Spurr, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Gill Booth	Ofsted Inspector
Alexandra Hook	Ofsted Inspector
Diane Buckle	Ofsted Inspector

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