

James Calvert Spence College

Acklington Road, Amble, Morpeth, Northumberland NE65 0NG

Inspection dates

16–17 October 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Until recently, leaders did not tackle weaknesses in teaching and pupils' outcomes effectively. Governors did not challenge leaders as robustly as they should have done.
- In the past, pupils' outcomes in key stage 2 have not been good enough. Weak teaching meant that pupils were not well prepared for key stage 3.
- Although improving considerably, pupils in key stage 4, including disadvantaged pupils, do not make consistently strong progress across all subjects.
- Not all subject leaders are skilled in bringing about rapid improvement in pupils' progress.
- Despite recent improvements, teaching across the school and within subjects is variable. Some teachers do not provide pupils with work which challenges them to achieve highly.
- Leaders have exciting plans to improve the quality of the school's curriculum. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these changes.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils' reading skills are developed well across the curriculum.
- Students in the sixth form do not make good progress, particularly those following work-related courses.

The school has the following strengths

- The executive headteacher is leading the school in the right direction. He is building a strong team of senior leaders who share his vision to improve the school.
- Despite the significant turbulence in staffing, staff morale is high. Most staff support the changes which have been made for the better.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are ambitious to improve the school further.
- Staff work very hard to ensure the welfare of pupils, particularly the most vulnerable. The school's work to support pupils' personal development is strong. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive.
- Leaders have been successful in ensuring that pupils behave well. There has been a marked reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions.
- Pupils' attendance has improved, including the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. It is now in line with the national average.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, in all key stages, so that pupils make good progress, by ensuring that teachers:
 - address the historical gaps in pupils' learning
 - make sure that pupils receive work that is suitably challenging
 - develop pupils' reading skills and extend pupils' vocabulary
 - continue to share the effective teaching which exists in the school.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including at key stage 2 and in the sixth form, by:
 - implementing the planned changes to the curriculum so that programmes of study build pupils' knowledge and skills progressively
 - ensuring that all subject leaders access training and support to gain the skills needed to improve pupils' progress across all year groups, and to tackle the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility
 - continuing to improve the outcomes, for disadvantaged pupils, in English and mathematics
 - continuing to improve governor training and development.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, the school's leadership team has been subject to considerable disruption, and there has been a high turnover of staff. This has hindered the speed with which leaders have been able to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.
- The executive headteacher was appointed in 2016. He has led the school effectively through this difficult period. He has been relentless in his commitment to tackle the weakest teaching and leadership. Consequently, the school is now moving in the right direction. The quality of teaching, pupils' achievement, pupils' behaviour and attendance are all showing clear signs of improvement. However, leaders acknowledge that they have more to do to make sure that this is a 'good' school.
- The relatively new team of senior leaders is highly committed, and shares the executive headteacher's vision for further improvement. Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's plans for improvement are well considered, and leaders are working systematically through these priorities. In the last year, they have successfully improved pupils' behaviour and attendance. Fixed-term exclusions are now below the national average and pupils' absence, in the main school, is in line with the national average.
- Subject leadership is also improving. There are clear strengths coming through in the leadership of mathematics and science, but it is not yet a consistent picture across all subjects. Although subject leaders have developed clear systems to measure and improve the quality of teaching, some subject leaders are in the earliest stage of their development and do not yet have the skills to challenge weaker teaching and improve pupils' progress. Senior leaders recognise this and are providing appropriate support and training, where this is the case.
- In the past, leadership of key stage 2 was weak. This is reflected in pupils' outcomes in the statutory assessment tests, which have been in the bottom 20% of schools nationally. In January 2018, a new leader was appointed who acted quickly to improve the quality of teaching and improve pupils' outcomes. As a result, there are improvements evident in pupils' provisional outcomes, for 2018, at both the expected standard and the higher standard. Most impressive is the rapid progress made by pupils during the same period. Leaders are clear that they need to build on these early successes, so that more pupils can reach the standards they are capable of.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It provides an appropriate range of qualifications at key stage 4. However, the curriculum is currently under review. Leaders have ambitious plans to develop a research-based curriculum, from key stage 2 onwards. Leaders have carried out teacher training to deliver this curriculum, which places greater focus on building pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding progressively. However, it is too early to measure the impact of these changes.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is generally well planned, although there are limited opportunities for pupils to explore different cultures. There are several opportunities for pupils to reflect on their role as good citizens in modern Britain, and to learn about democracy and diversity. In form time,

pupils explore a variety of topical issues. For example, they consider their views on animal rights, the exploitation of poorer countries, the use of fair trade and the consequences of using performance-enhancing drugs.

- Pupils have access to a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and educational visits. The breadth of sporting and cultural activities encourages pupils to learn how to work as part of a team or to develop their creative skills. Form time, referred to as 'interact' sessions, involves pupils in learning something new about a variety of pastimes, such as falconry, gardening or cross-stitch. The Duke of Edinburgh award scheme is well supported in the school, developing pupils' leadership skills, resilience and independence. Currently, leaders do not check which pupils are benefiting from taking part in the wide range of activities on offer.
- Leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively. They review the impact of their actions and interventions carefully. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils have improved overall, and their attendance has improved considerably. However, leaders acknowledge there is more to do to ensure that this group of pupils make consistently good progress across the curriculum and in all year groups, including in English and mathematics.
- The funding provided to support the individual needs of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is used appropriately. Although this group of pupils are not underachieving significantly, they do not make consistently good progress. Teachers and learning support assistants have recently received additional training to accelerate pupils' learning, and this training is beginning to make a positive difference.
- The physical education and sports fund for pupils in key stage 2 is used to provide pupils with an increasing range of after-school sports clubs. Resources and equipment enable more activities to take place during playtime and lunchtimes. However, leaders do not focus sufficiently on measuring the impact of their actions on pupils' fitness and participation.
- Leaders hold 'drop in' sessions for parents and carers and information evenings to keep parents informed about changes in the school. Leaders have also reviewed their complaints policy to ensure that it is easier for parents to follow when concerns do arise. Even so, leaders communication has not been effective in allaying the concerns of a small number of parents who remain dissatisfied about aspects of their child's education.
- Leaders have the capacity to bring about further improvements. They have the confidence of the majority of the staff, who share their ambition to raise standards in the school. Staff are appreciative of the recent improvements to the school's programme for professional development.

Governance of the school

- In the past, governors did not challenge leaders effectively. Standards fell, and weaknesses were not addressed quickly enough.
- More recently, governors have reorganised themselves so that they focus more sharply on key aspects of the school's work, such as safeguarding, provision for pupils who

have SEN and/or disabilities, or pupils' behaviour and attendance. As a result, they now offer greater support and challenge to school leaders.

- The newly appointed chair and vice-chair of the governing body have recently led a review of governors' skills. A comprehensive training programme is in place for new governors. Further training is planned to enable governors to challenge school leaders more effectively about pupils' outcomes, and to ensure that the governing body works efficiently to carry out their duties.
- Governors check that the additional funding provided is used appropriately to support the most vulnerable pupils. For example, they ensure that the pupil premium is used to improve the attendance and achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The designated safeguarding leader has systematically reviewed all aspects of the school's practice to ensure that they comply with the most recent legislation and guidance. Records show that the school works well with other agencies to support pupils' safety and well-being.
- A comprehensive training programme has been implemented to ensure that all staff are confident to carry out their duties to keep pupils safe. Regular updates for staff ensure that there is an effective safeguarding culture in the school.
- Leaders carry out rigorous checks on pupils who attend alternative provision off-site to ensure that these pupils are kept safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Some pupils benefit from high-quality teaching, but there is too much variability across pupil groups and subjects. Although school leaders have been successful in tackling the weakest teaching, the legacy of this is evident in the gaps which some pupils have in their knowledge. This is particularly the case at key stage 2 and 3 where, in the recent past, pupils have not been prepared for the next stage of their education effectively.
- Some teaching is planned well, but some teaching is not challenging enough. Currently, there are too few opportunities for the best practice in teaching to be shared. Too often, teaching is focused on pupils completing tasks, rather than building up pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding sequentially.
- While teachers' assessment of pupils' progress is accurate, some teachers do not use this information well enough to plan lessons to meet pupils' needs. When the work is not well matched to pupils' starting points, a small number of pupils, particularly in key stage 3, engage in off-task behaviour. This slows down the pace of learning.
- In most cases, pupils' books show that they take pride in their work. Leaders' efforts to raise expectations are evident across the school. Most teachers follow the school's feedback policy and provide pupils with adequate time to reflect on their learning or make improvements to their work. Pupils are also given ample opportunities to develop their writing skills, practising different styles of writing. However, errors in spelling,

punctuation and paragraphing are not routinely corrected, and pupils continue to make the same mistakes over time.

- In mathematics, teaching is improving, particularly in key stage 3 and 4. Teachers use their questioning skills effectively to check pupils' understanding and to challenge pupils' thinking. Pupils are developing their fluency well, but there are too few opportunities for them to develop their reasoning skills and to solve problems.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are beginning to make better progress than in the past, due to improved planning and intervention in the classroom. However, their weak reading skills are not being addressed sufficiently across subjects to enable them to make good progress across the curriculum.
- Most teachers set high expectations for pupils' behaviour and effort in lessons. Well-considered routines at the beginning of lessons mean that little learning time is lost. In some subjects, pupils show resilience when asked to work independently, but this is not always the case. In some lessons, pupils are too reliant on help from their teachers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are safe in the school. Pupils also said they feel safe in the school and are confident to seek help from teachers and other adults when they need to.
- A well-planned series of assemblies and form time enables pupils to learn about how to keep themselves safe from harm. For example, pupils who spoke to inspectors showed a detailed understanding of how to protect themselves when using social media or taking part in gaming activities online.
- Pupils are aware of different types of bullying, including homophobic bullying and bullying through social media. Bullying incidents are reported appropriately by pupils and adults. The school's records show that incidents are dealt with thoroughly. Some parents who responded to Ofsted's survey Parent View did not agree that the school deals with bullying effectively. However, many pupils were questioned by inspectors during the inspection, both formally and informally, and pupils did not support this view. Pupils said that bullying is rare and is dealt with quickly when it occurs. Nevertheless, leaders have responded well to parents' concerns and have recently raised the profile of their anti-bullying policy.
- Pupils are smartly dressed in their uniform and they are proud of their school. Most pupils present their work neatly in response to raised expectations by leaders and teachers. Pupils respond positively to adults' use of praise and rewards. They show kindness towards each other and listen attentively to other pupils' opinions.
- Pupils who are educated in alternative provision off site are well cared for. Leaders check on their progress regularly. Careful record-keeping shows that these pupils are attending well and that their behaviour, motivation and social skills are also improving.
- The quality of careers education, information and guidance is improving. The programme has been reviewed to ensure that all pupils, including those in the younger

years, have access to appropriate guidance. Pupils have ample opportunities to engage with local employers, and to visit colleges and universities. For example, pupils in Year 10 have mock interviews with local employers. Leaders show that all pupils who left Year 11 in 2018 moved on to education, employment or training.

- Although some pupils are not self-confident learners, teachers are increasingly giving pupils opportunities to explore and express their opinions. The school's focus on improving pupils' resilience is helping pupils to gain greater confidence.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school is calm and orderly. Pupils conduct themselves sensibly between lessons and at breaktimes. Social areas are well supervised by staff.
- Leaders have been successful in reducing the numbers of pupils who are excluded from school for a fixed period. These exclusions are now below the national average. Incidents of poor behaviour and the use of isolation are also reducing. This is because there are clear and effective systems in place to manage behaviour.
- The vast majority of pupils behave well in lessons. They listen attentively to each other and shows respect for others. On occasions, when teaching is not well-planned, pupils engage in off-task behaviour, particularly at key stage 3. However, most teachers manage pupils' behaviour well, using the school's systems effectively, and pupils respond quickly to correction.
- Over the past year, leaders have been successful in reducing pupils' absence so that it is in line with the national average. More pupils are attending regularly, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent has also fallen. This is due to the concerted efforts of the pastoral team, who challenge poor attendance rigorously. The team works well with pupils, parents and other external agencies to communicate the importance of good attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- At key stage 2, historical outcomes for pupils have been well below average. Weak teaching meant that almost half of pupils leaving Year 6 were not well prepared for key stage 3. However, in 2018, the school's provisional performance information for Year 6 shows some improvement in pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school's performance information for last year shows that pupils in Years 5 and 6 made accelerated progress between January and July. This was a direct result of leaders' concerted actions to improve the quality of teaching. Nevertheless, leaders recognise that there is much more to do to build on these improvements so that more pupils in key stage 2 can reach the expected and higher standards that they are capable of.

- At key stage 4, pupils' progress has improved over the past two years and is now average when compared to the progress of other pupils nationally. Pupils' attainment in English and mathematics is below average but also increasing.
- In 2018, the school's unvalidated performance information for pupils who left at the end of Year 11 shows that pupils' progress has continued to improve overall, and in some subjects. For example, pupils made good progress in science but weaker progress in English language, history and graphic products.
- Historically, the most able pupils have made good progress overall, in comparison with similar pupils nationally. In some subjects, pupils are set appropriate work, although additional challenge is lacking at times and prevents some pupils from reaching the highest GCSE grades, including in English and mathematics.
- The work in pupils' books shows that current pupils are making stronger progress than in the past, particularly at key stage 4, but inconsistencies remain across year groups and subjects. In English, for example, pupils are increasingly able to write about literary texts and to explain their opinions, but weaknesses in spelling and punctuation are not routinely corrected. In mathematics, pupils are practising their fluency well but have few opportunities to develop their reasoning skills. In humanities, there are still gaps in pupils' knowledge from previously weaker teaching, and the skills pupils need are not taught systematically. As a result of the variability in teaching, outcomes still require improvement.
- Leaders and teachers have made a concerted effort to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Although they have had some success, this remains a priority for the school. At key stage 4, differences in the progress of disadvantaged pupils', compared with that of other pupils nationally, diminished in 2017 across most subjects. In 2018, most disadvantaged pupils continued to do well in a range of subjects, but some did not do as well in English and mathematics. At key stage 2, leaders have also invested heavily in focused support for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, the differences between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and their peers' progress are reducing markedly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils eligible for the Year 7 catch-up funding are taught well and they make gains in their reading and mathematical skills. However, the school's whole-school programme for promoting pupils' literacy is not embedded. Leaders have begun to invest in library books and to organise whole-school events to encourage a love of reading. However, there is no coherent programme in place to develop pupils' reading skills across subjects. In many cases, pupils' weak reading skills and limited vocabulary are preventing them from making good progress across the curriculum.
- The small number of pupils who are educated in alternative provision off site take appropriate qualifications. They engage well with teachers and other adults to improve their skills in English, mathematics and science, as well as developing wider skills relevant in the workplace.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Leadership in the sixth form requires improvement, because leaders have not been quick to address the variability in students' outcomes across academic and work-

related courses. Historical outcomes have been below average. Students' progress on work-related programmes are particularly weak.

- The school's performance information shows that current students in Year 13 are making better progress on academic programmes than previous year groups. However, students' progress on work-related courses continues to be below average.
- Leaders in the sixth form agree that they have not been checking the quality of teaching rigorously enough. Leaders are not confident that all subject teachers base their estimates of students' current progress on robust assessments. Consequently, leaders have not had the information they need to intervene promptly when students were not meeting their targets. Leaders are now addressing these weaknesses.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is variable across subjects. Some teaching is challenging and well planned so that students attain the highest grades. Most teachers use their strong subject knowledge to engage students in learning new topics. Some teachers use questioning effectively to challenge students' thinking. However, this is not the case in all subjects.
- A small number of students do not attend the sixth form regularly, and leaders' strategies to improve their attendance are in the early stages of development. Students have a space to study independently in the school. However, they do not always make the best use of the study time available.
- Most of the students who begin the sixth form without having attained grade 4 or above in GCSE English and mathematics go on to improve their grade. This year, some additional teaching has been arranged in mathematics to help current students to attain higher grades.
- The school meets the requirements for the provision of 16 to 19 programmes. All students, whether taking academic or work-related subjects, undertake work experience. Careers advice and guidance enables students to make informed decisions about the next stage in their education, and students demonstrate high aspirations. The number of students who carry on their learning from Year 12 into Year 13 has increased. In 2018, almost all students moved on to appropriate higher education, further training or employment.
- The school's work to promote the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils in the sixth form is effective. During form time, students in the sixth form make a valuable contribution to working with younger pupils. Sixth form students are also given regular tutor support to develop their skills and to review their individual progress. They take part in a range of activities to develop their leadership skills, for example through sport, as classroom assistants, and as part of the student council.

School details

Unique reference number	122363
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10077831

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

Type of school	All through
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	731
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sean Harris
Executive Headteacher	Neil Rodgers
Telephone number	01665710636
Website	www.jcsc.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@jcsc.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 September–1 October 2014

Information about this school

- James Calvert Spence College is a smaller-than-average, all through school. It was previously a 13-18 high school which began admitting pupils into Years 5, 6, 7 and 8 in the academic year 2015/16.
- The school's sixth form is also smaller than average.
- The executive headteacher and the head of school took up post in January 2016.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is average.
- Most pupils are White British.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision full-time. The school works with the following providers: Engage, Skills 4 U, Choyzes, the local authority's virtual school for children who are looked after and Northumberland's pupil referral unit.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a range of lessons across year groups and subject areas. Many of the observations were carried out with senior leaders from the school.
- Meetings were held with senior and subject leaders, teachers and governors.
- Inspectors held informal and formal discussions with pupils, observed pupils in their form groups and observed pupils during social times.
- Inspectors listened to a group of pupils read.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation, plans for improvement, analyses of pupil performance, attendance and behaviour records, and safeguarding files.
- Examples of pupils' work was looked at in detail. This included work from pupils of different abilities and year groups.
- Inspectors took account of the 131 responses from parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View, and the 40 free-text responses from parents. Inspectors also took into account 60 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lynn Kenworthy, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Fiona Dixon	Ofsted Inspector
Diane Buckle	Her Majesty's Inspector
Barry Found	Her Majesty's Inspector

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