

Inspection of a good school: Easington Academy

Stockton Road, Easington Village, Peterlee, County Durham SR8 3AY

Inspection dates:

13–14 November 2019

Outcome

Easington Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and teachers provide pupils with an effective curriculum. They make sure that pupils acquire knowledge across many subjects. Pupils value their learning. Teachers help them to learn in purposeful ways. Teaching is well planned to help pupils remember important ideas. Over time, pupils achieve well in the majority of their subjects. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps.

Leaders are mindful of pupils' personal development. They are developing programmes to enhance pupils' self-confidence and self-awareness. Pupils have access to a school nurse and a counsellor for social and emotional support. They take part in a variety of experiences to develop their confidence and their social skills. These include sport, musical performances and residential visits. Pupils enjoy these opportunities.

Pupils behave well. They enjoy school and attend regularly. Pupils know whom to go to if they need help or support. Leaders take bullying seriously, and pupils agree that this is the case. Staff create an orderly environment based upon clear expectations of behaviour. Relationships between pupils and staff are respectful.

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

Pupils study a range of subjects across a carefully planned curriculum. Subject leaders work with colleagues from across the trust to develop their expertise. They use research well to inform their teaching. Teachers use features such as 'smart tasks' and 'knowledge organisers' to help pupils learn. Pupils find the subjects they study interesting.

Teachers help pupils to build their vocabulary. They introduce specialist words at appropriate times. They teach these words in different contexts. This helps pupils to develop their understanding of new words. Teachers use scaffolds and prompts to help pupils to get to grips with more complex texts. Pupils respond well to these tasks. Some of the actions to promote pupils' wider reading are less developed.

Leaders have reinvigorated the curriculum in modern foreign languages. This has supported an increase in the proportion of pupils studying languages. Almost half of Year 9 pupils now study French. Teaching in languages helps pupils to learn new vocabulary and grammar. Many pupils said that this was one of their favourite subjects.

Over time, pupils have achieved well in the majority of subjects. This is particularly evident in science, geography, history and English. In 2019, outcomes in GCSE mathematics and English dipped due to less effective curriculum planning. Inspectors looked in depth at the curriculum in English and mathematics. Both subjects now have a well-planned curriculum in place. Teaching in these subjects is strong. Leaders, in partnership with the trust, are helping teachers to enhance their planning and build their expertise further.

Leaders make sure that teachers have exceptional opportunities for professional development, including through research. Teachers develop shared resources to support their teaching. Teachers apply the curriculum well, although some differences between subjects remain.

Leaders across the trust are developing an extended curriculum. As a result, pupils follow extra topics in subjects including art and geography. This enriches their knowledge at many levels. Leaders make sure that all pupils study a full range of subjects. This is particularly the case for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They follow a curriculum that is as ambitious as that of their peers. Teachers provide effective support that enables pupils with SEND to achieve well.

Pupils take part in extra experiences and courses. For example, they perform at concert venues and take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Some pupils are less involved in these activities. Leaders are introducing a 'pledge' system. This is to encourage more pupils to take part in such activities. Pupils receive effective careers guidance. They develop their self-confidence through work experience.

Pupils learn in an orderly and supportive environment. Leaders make sure that pupils complete their courses. This prepares them for future education and employment.

Leaders support their staff with practical steps to manage workload. They provide specific support for staff welfare. Leaders make sure that staff can teach with little disruption. Staff appreciate working in such a positive environment.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that staff are aware of safeguarding issues. Training is up to date. The safeguarding team work with staff to raise awareness of pupils' welfare. Staff know whom to talk to if they have concerns. Leaders follow up any concerns quickly. They record these concerns thoroughly. The safeguarding team works with other professionals to check on and support pupils' welfare. Leaders teach pupils about safety in assemblies and in tutor time. Leaders carry out thorough checks on the suitability of adults working at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, some aspects of the curriculum have not been given sufficient emphasis. This has led to variations in pupils' outcomes. Leaders should further refine planning to help pupils to apply their knowledge equally well across all subjects.
- Leaders and teachers have done much to build pupils' vocabulary in lessons. Some of their approaches to encourage pupils to read more widely are at a much earlier stage of development. Leaders should explore how they can encourage pupils to read more widely.
- Leaders do a lot to enhance pupils' personal development. Pupils benefit from musical performances and residential experiences. There is some variation in the proportions of pupils involved in these experiences. Leaders are developing a 'pledge' system to map out pupils' participation. They should develop these initiatives to encourage more pupils to benefit from experiences that enhance their personal development.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Easington Community Science College, to be good on 12 April 2011.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	138075
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10087646
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	733
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Maggie Saxton
Headteacher	Toni Spoons
Website	www.easingtoncsc.durham.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	26 January 2016

Information about this school

- In March 2017, the school joined the North East Learning Trust. The executive headteacher is also a deputy chief executive officer of the trust. She is also executive headteacher of Ashington Academy and Bedlington Academy in Northumberland.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been a significant change in staffing. Approximately half of the staff are new to the school since the previous inspection. In September 2019, a new head of school and a new assistant headteacher took up post.

Information about this inspection

- We held discussions with the executive headteacher, the head of school and the chief executive officer of the trust. We also talked to a range of other senior leaders. I also talked to several members of the trust and the local academy council.
- We talked to pupils during lesson visits and at break and lunchtimes to find out their views on behaviour and safety.
- We looked in detail into the curriculum in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and art. We talked to leaders and teachers about their curriculum plans. We also talked to pupils about their learning and what they knew and remembered in these subjects. We looked at pupils' work.

- We checked safeguarding arrangements. We looked at the school's work to make staff and pupils aware of safeguarding issues. We also looked at safeguarding records to see how concerns over pupils' safety were recorded and followed up. We also explored how leaders checked the suitability of adults working on site.

Inspection team

Malcolm Kirtley, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Karen Gammack

Ofsted Inspector

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