

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Hope Wood Academy

Crawlaw Road, Easington Colliery, Peterlee, Durham SR8 3LP

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 October 2024

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Adele Pearson-Atkinson. This school is part of The Ascent Academies' Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Carolyn Morgan, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Lynn Watson.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this highly ambitious school. Their learning is personalised to meet their unique needs. Pupils are ambassadors for the school. They are confident communicating with visitors. Pupils happily share experiences they have in school and beyond the school gates. This includes 'student take over day'. Pupils become senior leaders, teachers, caretakers and administrative assistants. They learn valuable employability skills and recall them with pride.

Pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plan) shape their education. Staff have high expectations about what pupils can do. As a result, pupils make exceptional progress in their learning and development. Preparation for next steps takes place from the early years through to sixth form. Pupils become increasingly independent over time. They also learn how to stay safe in a complex world.

Pupils display the school's values of honesty, integrity and kindness consistently. Staff model these character traits well. Pupils behave well and support one another. This includes acting as peer mentors and helping younger pupils in therapy sessions. The school includes parents and carers in pupils' education exceptionally well. Parents attend informal engagement sessions in school. Pupils are proud to show parents what they have learned.

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

School and trust staff have made significant improvements to the quality of education. This includes developing distinct curriculum pathways that meet pupils' needs. Sophisticated connections link pupils' EHC plan targets to their learning. The school carefully considers what each pupil needs to learn in the curriculum. Staff expertly break down the most important knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn. While doing this, they consider pupils' EHC plan targets too. Across the school, staff check pupils' progression carefully. They do this consistently well. Pupils embed and build on their learning in a highly effective way.

Careers education is carefully sequenced. For example, pupils in key stage 4 enjoy a step-by-step approach to mock interviews. Pupils progressively move from familiar contexts and people to unfamiliar ones. This incremental challenge builds pupils' confidence in an impressive way. It also contributes to their ambitious and varied destinations after Year 11 and Year 14.

Reading is a priority in the school. The youngest children enjoy an effective, bespoke approach. When phonics begins, teaching is precise and impactful. Focused and timely checks identify and inform the extra support that pupils need beyond the classroom. As a result, pupils make progress in reading and enjoy daily stories. Reading is part of a school-wide approach to developing pupils' communication and language. All adults understand pupils' communication targets and how pupils can achieve them. This helps pupils to flourish. Skilled adults take every opportunity to promote positive communication. During social time, staff encourage pupils to follow language cues and take turns. In the sixth form, students with profound and multiple learning disabilities enjoy sensory stimulation. Their development in communication is evident through sustained eye contact and expressive sounds.

Staff commit to ensuring every pupil at the school has a voice. Pupils' views are a driving force for improvement in the school. For example, pupils' interests shape the curriculum. Key stage 4 pupils learn vocational qualifications that they suggest to the school. This includes hair and beauty as well as construction. Pupils also influence the range of experiences available through twice-yearly activities weeks. Pupils experience picnics in the park, trips to places on public transport and a day at the beach. These, and other trips, broaden pupils' experiences significantly. Pupils do not see their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) as a barrier. They are proud to be part of a wider world and represent their school in the local area.

Students in the sixth form learn extensively in the wider community. This includes running a community café. Students also take regular trips to the local supermarket. Here, they buy items for a planned purpose. They navigate around the store and manage money to make their purchases. Students regularly visit a range of post-19 destinations. This builds their confidence for transition extremely well.

Trustees and trust leaders share a clear set of values that inform their decisions. This spreads through the school and impacts pupils' experience exceptionally well. Everyone in the school is a passionate advocate for pupils with SEND. Staff are proud to work at the

school. They feel valued and listened to. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school. They are right to be confident in sending their children to Hope Wood. One represented the views of many, saying their child 'has a smile on her face after every day'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in September 2018.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and](#)

[protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	138718
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10297374
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	225
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	16
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Lynn Watson
CEO of the trust	Carolyn Morgan
Headteacher	Adele Pearson-Atkinson
Website	www.ascenttrust.org/hope-wood
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 September 2018, under section 5 OR section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Hope Wood Academy is part of The Ascent Academies' Trust.
- The headteacher has an executive role across this school and one other school in the trust.
- The school provides education for pupils with a range of SEND, including autism, moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school has provision for two-year-olds. Currently, no two-year-olds attend the school.
- A small number of pupils access alternative provision through two unregistered provisions. Two pupils are also dual registered with registered provisions.

- The school's sixth form is on a separate site at Eden Hill Road, Peterlee, Durham, SR8 5DD.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, acting headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteachers over the course of the inspection. The lead inspector also met with the trust leader for teaching and learning and the chief executive officer of the trust.
- The lead inspector spoke with the chair of the board of trustees and one other trustee. They reviewed documentation relating to governance, including minutes from governor meetings.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector visited the sixth-form site, visited a sample of lessons and met with the leader responsible for sixth form.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors met with groups of pupils and staff formally throughout the inspection and spoke with them informally at social times and in lessons.
- A range of school documents was reviewed, including the school's self-evaluation and the school improvement plan.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.

Inspection team

Hannah Millett, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Patricia Head

Ofsted Inspector

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