

Inspection of Whickham School

Burnthouse Lane, Whickham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE16 5AR

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 January 2025

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

The headteacher of this school is Fraser Turnbull. This school is part of Whickham School and Sports College single academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sasha Ban.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school has high ambitions for all its pupils. The broad curriculum prepares pupils well for life beyond school. Pupils achieve well at Whickham School. Staff have high expectations of pupils' conduct. Pupils are polite and friendly. Through their actions, they embody the school's values of aspiration, respect, resilience and empathy. The school environment is calm and respectful. Pupils behave very well.

Pupils appreciate the help that they receive from staff. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included in the life of the school. The pupils who are part of the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision) access their education in the mainstream school. They receive highly effective bespoke support to develop their communication skills and prepare them for adult life.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of activities that help them to develop their talents and interests. These include sports, art club and the school's musical productions. Trips to places of interest help to develop pupils' understanding of the subjects that they study. For example, pupils visit museums and places of worship and they enjoy trips abroad.

Pupils learn to make a positive contribution to their community. For example, they run charity events and the school, including the sixth-form students, supports local food banks. These help pupils to become confident and resilient young people.

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

The school has designed an ambitious curriculum. It has thought carefully about the important knowledge that pupils should learn. Staff frequently review the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of pupils and sustains their interests. For example, in English there have been changes to the poetry that is studied at key stage 4 in order to appeal to all pupils. The proportion of pupils studying the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects is consistently high.

Teachers are well trained. They have secure subject knowledge in the subjects that they teach. The school has identified effective strategies that teachers use to deliver the curriculum. Teachers ensure that pupils often revisit the most important content in each subject. Teachers use questioning well to check pupils' understanding. Pupils value the 'I do, you do, we do' structure used in lessons which helps them to produce their best work. Some of these consistent strategies are not applied routinely in sixth-form lessons, which means that students here do not benefit in the same way that pupils in other year groups do.

The school accurately identifies the additional needs of pupils with SEND. It provides staff with clear guidance about how to support these pupils effectively through the use of pupil passports. Staff use this information to ensure that these pupils can learn successfully alongside their peers. Pupils with SEND therefore achieve well.

The school identifies and addresses the reading needs of pupils who join in Year 7. For some pupils, this includes help to fill any gaps that they may have in their phonics knowledge. Books that pupils read in Year 7 and Year 8 are matched well to pupils' reading knowledge. Beyond Year 8 there is not as strong a focus on reading. This means that some pupils in the school do not read widely and often.

Pupils behave very well, and lessons are calm and purposeful. Most pupils attend well because they enjoy school. The school has prioritised reducing the number of disadvantaged pupils, including those with SEND, who are absent too often. Pastoral staff work closely with these pupils and their families. As a result, attendance for some pupils is improving.

The school's personal development provision prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Due to a sharp focus on mental health, pupils know how to keep themselves mentally healthy. They know how to keep themselves safe, including online. The school is very proud of its inclusive ethos. A pupil group effectively promotes tolerance for all. Pupils benefit from a programme of careers education. They take part in work experience in the sixth form, and pupils in lower school also experience the world of work. This helps pupils to make informed decisions about their futures.

Leaders are determined to provide the best opportunities for all pupils to be successful. Staff are proud to work at the school. They value greatly the support of the school leaders, who are considerate of well-being and workload. The trust and governing body are highly effective in their roles, providing support and as the school continues to build on improvements and work in the best interests of pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's reading programme is less well developed beyond Years 7 and 8. This means that too few pupils in other year groups benefit from the promotion of reading across the school and do not read as often and widely as they could. The school should ensure that pupils in all year groups are encouraged to read more widely and often.

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	137360
Local authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	10323025
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,720
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	288
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sasha Ban
Headteacher	Fraser Turnbull
Website	www.whickhamschool.org
Dates of previous inspection	17 and 18 May 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of a single academy trust.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with autism. At the time of this inspection, 21 pupils were accessing this provision.
- The school uses nine alternative providers for some pupils. Two of these are registered providers and seven of these are unregistered providers.
- 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

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, history, science, modern foreign languages and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors discussed the curriculum in some other subjects. They visited a sample of lessons in these subjects. Inspectors also visited tutor time.
- The lead inspector met with the local governing body, including the chair of governors and a member of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors observed breaktimes, lunchtimes and assemblies. They met with groups of pupils and spoke to pupils around the school site.
- Inspectors conducted further meetings to discuss personal development, behaviour and attendance and the sixth form.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- An inspector spoke to one of the unregistered alternative providers that the school uses.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys. They also considered responses to the parent survey, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Jessica McKay, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Tristan Keates	Ofsted Inspector
Katherine Snowdon	Ofsted Inspector
Rob Spurr	Ofsted Inspector

Bernard Clark

Ofsted Inspector

Alexandra Hook

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025