

The Skipton Academy

Gargrave Road, Skipton, North Yorkshire BD23 1UQ

Inspection dates

21–22 March 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The school is improving under the leadership of the principal, but inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching, in pupils' personal development and welfare, and in their outcomes. Not all staff follow leaders' policies consistently.
- There is variability in teachers' planning to meet pupils' needs and in teachers' use of questions. Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough.
- Although the rate of pupils' attendance is improving, it was still below the national average in 2017/18. The rate of pupils' persistent absence is reducing, but it was above the national average in 2017/18.
- Pupils' behaviour is not consistently good. While it is improving, some lessons are still disrupted by low-level misbehaviour.
- Pupils' progress in GCSE mathematics in 2017/18 was below the national average.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged made progress below the national average at the end of key stage 4 in 2017/18.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have improved the school from when it was judged inadequate in June 2017. They have the capacity to continue its improvement.
- Morale among staff is high. They are motivated by leaders' actions since taking over and they believe in leaders' vision for the school.
- There is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. Pupils feel safe.
- For the previous two years, pupils have made progress in their GCSEs across a wide range of subjects that is at least in line with the national average. Most current pupils in mathematics are making strong progress.
- The difference in progress between pupils who are disadvantaged and other pupils nationally closed substantially in 2017/18 compared with 2016/17.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders should take further action to ensure that staff at all levels consistently follow school policies, particularly those to do with planning to meet pupils' needs and managing pupils' behaviour, so that standards rise further.
- Further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, so that it is consistently good, by:
 - ensuring that teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially boys, are consistently high, by planning lessons and setting tasks which challenge pupils at the right level
 - further improving the quality of teachers' use of questions, so that pupils' understanding is checked before moving on, and so that pupils are sufficiently stretched in their thinking
 - making sure that pupils' standards of written English and spelling are consistent across all subjects.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, by:
 - further improving rates of pupils' attendance and reducing their rate of persistent absence
 - continuing to reduce the rate of fixed-term exclusions
 - eliminating the low-level disruption that still exists in a minority of lessons
 - strengthening some pupils' resilience so that they do not give up when work becomes more challenging
 - ensuring that pupils consistently adhere to the school's dress code.
- Continue to improve pupils' outcomes, particularly in mathematics and for pupils who are disadvantaged.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have taken decisive and effective action to quickly improve the school since its previous inspection in June 2017, when the school was judged to require special measures. Although there is more to be done, morale and motivation among staff are high. Staff who spoke to inspectors commented on the 'unity' that now exists in the school and of the 'clarity' in leaders' actions and expectations.
- Senior leaders have put in place a programme of continuing professional development for middle leaders, teachers and non-teachers. All of the staff spoken to by inspectors agree that the training has supported them in doing their jobs more effectively. For example, non-teachers have received effective training in aspects of pupils' pastoral care. Teachers' practice has improved in most cases as a consequence of training on planning to meet pupils' needs. Although there is still some inconsistency, middle leaders have typically become more effective at monitoring how well pupils are progressing, as a result of training through the external support accessed by the school.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. The curriculum is effective in supporting pupils to make appropriate choices for further study or training when they reach the end of Year 11.
- Leaders have acted to ensure that pupils have a secure understanding of British values. Pupils describe a tolerant school. They told inspectors about the information they have received about other cultures and faiths, about Brexit and about democracy. In a range of lessons, pupils learn important aspects of different lifestyles and traditions, such as the differences between arranged and forced marriages, for example.
- Additional funding for the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding is effectively used. Leaders have got a firm grip on how this funding is deployed, based on their evaluations of the relative successes of previous years' spending. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving.
- The recently appointed leader with responsibility for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has started the process of building a more aspirational culture for these pupils. She has taken action to improve the quality of the systems which are necessary to provide pupils with SEND with the support they need. Consequently, teachers' planning for pupils with SEND is improving and leading to pupils' strengthening progress.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. It provides pupils with a number of extra-curricular opportunities to further develop their broader knowledge and skills. For example, in addition to a wide range of sporting opportunities, the school is an 'associate school' of the Royal Shakespeare Company. Pupils can also actively participate in environmental matters through the Ecoclub. The school council is, according to pupils, increasingly growing in status and influence.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a measured view of the school. They do not kid themselves when things are not as strong as they need to be. Nor do they pat themselves on the back when things have gone well. They have a balanced and honest view of the school.
- The consequence of their reflective approach is that governors have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This means that they are well placed to hold leaders to account for the performance of the school. They demonstrate an ability to challenge leaders about school priorities and to ask suitably probing questions.
- Governors have been judicious in their choice of external support to the school. Since the previous inspection in June 2017, they have been effective in putting support into priority areas. As a result, strong improvements are evident. Governors have substantially reduced the school's reliance on such external support. A small, targeted level of external support remains, but leaders are standing on their own two feet and have the capacity to maintain and extend the school's improvements.
- While governors have been effective in working with leaders to quickly improve the school, there is more work to be done to secure consistently good teaching, pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, and pupils' outcomes. Governors and leaders have not secured the consistent application of vital policies by all staff, such as planning for pupils' improved progress and pupils' behaviour management.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school.
- Leaders ensure that the necessary checks on the suitability of adults to work in the school are carried out. These checks meet legal requirements. Leaders follow the required processes when managing safeguarding cases, so that appropriate external advice and guidance are sought and acted upon.
- Leaders make sure that the necessary safeguarding training is provided to staff. This includes, for example, training in the 'Prevent' duty to protect pupils from the risks of radicalisation and extremism, and the dangers of 'county lines' exploitation. Staff have been trained about the signs of abuse to watch out for and they understand what to do should they be concerned.
- The systems for monitoring and managing child protection concerns are effective. Leaders maintain appropriate records of referrals to external agencies and ensure that the necessary actions are taken to support and protect pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is variable. There is some effective teaching across subjects and years, which helps a substantial number of pupils to make good progress, but this is not consistent. While teachers often make effective use of

pupils' assessment information to set tasks at a suitably challenging level, this is not consistently the case.

- Often, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are high. This is inconsistent, however. At times, teachers do not challenge pupils sufficiently to complete their work to a high enough standard. Typically, this is more evident for boys than girls, with lower standards of presentation and completion of work sometimes accepted of boys in some subject areas.
- Leaders have introduced a system to improve the effectiveness of teachers' planning. Often, this is used to good effect, so that over time, pupils of different abilities and needs make strong gains in their learning. For instance, disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND make good progress much of the time, as a result of teachers' effective use of pupils' information in planning sequences of lessons. Sometimes, however, teachers' application of this system is less well employed, and pupils make less progress as a result.
- Teachers often make effective use of questions to check pupils' understanding of the learning before moving on. At times, such questioning is also used to good effect in stretching pupils in their thinking. For example, in key stage 4 English, the teacher's use of questions enabled pupils to think deeply about Shakespearean audiences' attitudes towards marriage and gender roles. At other times, however, teachers' questioning is pitched at a more superficial level, or does not enable teachers to check pupils' understanding before moving on.
- Across a range of subjects, pupils' standards of accuracy in written English are inconsistent.
- Typically, teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge. They use this knowledge skilfully, much of the time, to motivate most pupils and to provide them with the information and skills they need to be successful learners. Strong subject knowledge was evident across a wide range of subjects, including English, mathematics, science, art and physical education.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Often, pupils take pride in their work and try their hardest. At times, however, pupils are less committed to the quality of their work or its presentation. This is more prevalent with the least able pupils and in lower sets. Sometimes, pupils are easily deterred when the work becomes more challenging. At these times, they give up quite easily rather than sticking with it and trying to work it out.
- Most pupils are correctly dressed in school uniform and are proud of their school. Some, however, do not wear their uniform correctly and do not have the same pride in representing their school to their community. Leaders have more to do to establish consistently high standards of uniform and to persuade some parents of the need for their support in achieving this.

- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school. Pupils who spoke to inspectors agreed that bullying is unusual in school. They know whom they would tell if they were worried and are confident that it would be sorted out.
- Leaders have put in place an appropriate curriculum for supporting pupils in their personal development and welfare. For example, the 'Mind, Body and Soul' programme for Year 10 girls' well-being was introduced in response to pupils' needs. Pupils told inspectors about the information and education they have received about keeping safe with regard to knife crime, drugs, alcohol and e-safety. Pupils have also received helpful advice on how to cope with bereavement.
- Pupils attending alternative educational provision are effectively monitored and supported in their personal development and welfare by leaders at both the alternative provision and the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The rate of pupils' attendance is below the national average. The rate of their persistent absence is above the national average. However, leaders have taken effective action to improve pupils' attendance and reduce their persistent absence. As a result, overall attendance is improving, compared with the same period of time during 2017/18. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND is also improving compared with the same time last year.
- In 2017/18, the rate of fixed-term exclusions was above the national average, as was the figure for pupils who were repeatedly excluded on a fixed-term basis. However, following leaders' actions, there is an improving picture in 2018/19 to date. The number of pupils who have been excluded for a fixed period this academic year is substantially lower than it was at the same time in 2017/18. The proportion of pupils who have been repeatedly excluded is also markedly lower than it was at the same point in 2017/18.
- Pupils' behaviour is variable. Most of the time, pupils conduct themselves well, with adherence to the school's expectations for good behaviour. Inspectors saw strong standards of behaviour throughout the inspection, both in lessons and around the site. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that behaviour is improving. However, they also told inspectors that there is still a small but persistent amount of low-level disruption in some lessons, especially in lower sets. They also told inspectors that a few teachers are not as consistent in their application of the school's behaviour management policy as most teachers.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- At the end of key stage 4, pupils' progress was in line with the national average in both 2016/17 and 2017/18. Pupils made average progress in a range of subjects in 2017/18, including in English, science, history and geography. Pupils also made average progress in their 'option' GCSEs. Progress in modern foreign languages was above the national average.

- Pupils' progress in mathematics was below the national average in 2017/18. However, there are encouraging signs of improving progress in mathematics for pupils currently in the school. This is as a consequence of strengthening leadership, improving teaching and effective planning to meet pupils' needs.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress was below the national average in both 2016/17 and 2017/18. However, the difference in progress between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally narrowed substantially in 2017/18 compared with the previous year. The progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school is improving, across a range of subjects and years.
- The progress of pupils currently in the school is variable across a range of subjects and years. Often, pupils make strong gains in their learning as a result of well-planned programmes of study and effective teaching. At other times, however, pupils' progress is less strong because the teaching is not as well attuned to the needs of the pupils.
- Pupils move on to appropriately challenging destinations at the end of their key stage 4 studies. This is as a result of an effective careers education, information, advice and guidance programme, together with a suitable curriculum. The proportion of pupils who make a successful transition to a post-16 next step is substantially above the national average.

School details

Unique reference number	141179
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10077717

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Not applicable
Number of pupils on the school roll	292
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	Not applicable
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair	Alan Halsall
Principal	Richard McManus
Telephone number	01756 792965
Website	www.theskiptonacademy.co.uk
Email address	admin@theskiptonacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–14 June 2017

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school is part of the Craven Educational Trust, which it joined in August 2014. Governance responsibility rests with the board of directors. Following the previous inspection in June 2017, the governing body was dissolved and replaced with the current board of directors.
- The current principal and deputy principal were appointed in September 2017, after the previous inspection.

- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with several smaller proportions of other heritages represented.
- The number of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is below the national average. The number of pupils who are entitled to support for their SEND is above the national average.
- The number of pupils who are disadvantaged is below the national average.
- The school has links with several providers of alternative education: Craven Pupil Referral Service, North Yorkshire County Council Inclusion Service and Tracks.
- The school is in receipt of Department for Education funding to provide external support, which is delivered through Northern Lights Teaching School Alliance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a wide range of lessons across subjects and years, sometimes accompanied by senior leaders. During these visits, inspectors talked to pupils and looked in their books.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work across several subjects, with different year groups and pupil abilities represented.
- Meetings were held with the principal. An inspector met with the chief executive officer of the trust. An inspector met a governor and spoke with another governor on the telephone.
- Inspectors met senior leaders with responsibility for: attendance; behaviour; SEND; the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; careers education, information, advice and guidance; pupils' personal development and welfare; the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding; the curriculum; pupils' progress information; and safeguarding.
- Meetings were held with three groups of pupils, drawn from across year groups. Inspectors also spoke informally with pupils around the site at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Meetings were held with three groups of staff: subject leaders, non-teachers and teachers at different career points.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, on corridors, in social spaces such as the dining room and at the end of the day when pupils were leaving the school site.
- An inspector spoke on the telephone to three of the providers of alternative education used by the school.
- A wide range of documentation was examined. This includes: leaders' self-evaluation and plans; minutes of governing body meetings; attendance, behaviour and exclusion information; bullying logs and pupils' progress information. Leaders' processes for vetting adults' suitability to work in school were checked, along with safeguarding files.

Inspection team

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