

Studio West

West Denton Way, West Denton NE5 2SZ

Inspection dates

24–25 January 2017

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
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Despite dealing with a number of significant challenges in establishing a new school, leaders have an overgenerous view of the impact they have had on improving the quality of teaching and the progress pupils have made, including for students in the sixth form.
- Improvement plans lack clear timescales for when actions will occur and what the impact will be. This makes it difficult for governors to check and challenge leaders about the school's improvement.
- The quality of teaching is too variable between subjects and year groups. Work is not consistently pitched at the right level and lacks challenge.
- Although progress is improving, pupils do not make consistently good progress in a wide range of subjects in school, including mathematics.
- Governors do not have a good enough strategic overview. Governors have not done enough to monitor the impact additional funding is having, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.
- The progress made by sixth-form students is inconsistent across both academic and vocational pathways.
- Despite improvement, overall, pupils' attendance remains too low.

The school has the following strengths

- School leaders have established a school with a unique vision for learning. Leaders have provided experiences and opportunities that have transformed the lives of many young people at the school.
- The school has forged excellent links with its business partners that help to build pupils' confidence and make learning relevant.
- All teachers and coaches are committed to the welfare and wider personal development of their pupils. This has enabled many pupils to reconnect with learning with fresh purpose.
- Pupils are courteous, considerate and well-behaved young people. They show a clear pride in their school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils' outcomes across the school, and especially in mathematics, are good, by making sure that:
 - in all subjects, teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensure that pupils work at a good pace
 - all groups of pupils are consistently set challenging work, particularly the middle-ability and most-able pupils
 - teachers' questioning effectively probes pupils' responses and any misconceptions are swiftly tackled
 - pupils are provided with more opportunities to apply their knowledge, understanding and skills when undertaking assessments tasks.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management even further by making sure that:
 - improvement plans clearly show the intended impact that actions are to have on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' progress
 - self-evaluation gives greater weight to the progress pupils are making compared with pupils nationally
 - leaders' evaluations of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in school are accurate and that any remaining variances between subjects and year groups are eliminated
 - governors build their strategic levels of knowledge and understanding about pupils' progress and the impact of additional funding so that they are able to challenge leaders more effectively.
- Continue to develop a range of strategies to further improve pupils' attendance and reduce levels of persistent absence.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- While leaders have worked tirelessly and passionately to establish a school with a distinctive character and ethos, leadership and management requires improvement. This is because leaders have an overgenerous view of how well the school is doing and so believe it is more effective than it actually is.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good enough to help all groups of pupils, including students in the sixth form, make consistently good progress. Leaders know what needs improving but do not consider carefully enough these weaknesses when making overall judgements on the school's effectiveness.
- Leaders' plans for tackling identified weaknesses are not good enough. Strategic plans are not sufficiently clear or precise in detailing what actions will happen, by when and what impact this will have on pupils' progress. This makes it difficult for leaders and governors to check the impact of their work on weaker areas over time.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is not as effective as it could be. Although leaders regularly observe teaching and review pupils' work, this checking is not having enough of an impact. Overall, judgements that are made about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are sometimes too generous.
- Leaders do not check carefully enough whether previous areas for improvement they have set for teachers have been successfully tackled. Timescales for when teachers need to make identified improvements are not clear, and this makes it difficult to judge the impact that leaders are having.
- Performance management targets are stronger. Leaders do set targets that are linked clearly to pupils' achievements and progress. However, the clarity shown in these targets is not reflected in current strategic plans. Leaders have shown that they are not afraid to tackle underperformance.
- Pupils benefit from unique curriculum experiences that make their learning relevant and enable them to apply a wide variety of social and communication skills in meaningful contexts. The business engagement manager has established a comprehensive range of over 150 partners in two-way links where partners effectively contribute to learning in school and provide placements outside of school.
- Pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum. Their work placements are suitably complemented by more-established academic subjects such as mathematics, English and science.
- The curriculum also provides pupils with a good range of opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Assemblies, for example, provide pupils and students with well-planned opportunities to learn about the rule of law, individual liberty, racism and prejudice.
- Leaders have created a nurturing and caring school community that provides high-quality care. Many of the pupils who joined the school from disrupted educational backgrounds have re-engaged with school and progressed to future destinations because of the quality of care and support they received. Leaders have developed a culture where pupils feel safe and valued.

- Leaders have been successful in improving pupils' progress in particular subjects, including English and art. Progress in other subjects, such as geography and computer science, has been more variable, while improvements in mathematics have remained slower. As a result, outcomes are not consistently good across a wide range of subjects.

Governance of the school

- Governors are keen and committed and have worked hand in hand with leaders to establish the vibrant school community. However, governors do not have a clear strategic overview of how well the school is doing. They take a keen interest in wanting to learn more about how the school operates and have recently recruited additional governors with educational and financial expertise. It is too soon to see the impact of these recent additions to the governing body.
- Governors receive a great deal of information about how well individual pupils are achieving. This information is not gathered at a strategic level to help governors see the big picture and check the impact of teaching on groups of pupils or subjects over time.
- Governors are aware of how additional funding is being spent. However, they are less secure on the overall impact it is having on diminishing differences between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Additional funding plans do not clearly outline what lessons have been learned from previous spending or identify the specific barriers and challenges that current pupils face. Consequently, governors do not have a good enough strategic overview of the impact that this additional funding is having.
- School improvement plans are not as useful a tool for governors as they could be. Due to a lack of clear timescales and quantifiable milestones, governors are not consistently effective in challenging leaders on the impact and progress that they are making.
- Governors are proud of the school and the unique contribution it makes to the lives of its pupils. They are strong advocates of the school's work in forging two-way partnerships with local partners that provide a distinctive character to the educational experiences of pupils. They forge strong links with business and the community.
- Governors work with the academy trust to establish an additional layer of accountability for school performance. They take their responsibilities for performance management seriously. They are exploring performance information with increasing rigour.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils' welfare lies at the heart of the school and leaders take their responsibilities to keep pupils safe extremely seriously. They check the suitability of adults working at the school and pursue any concerns about pupil welfare rigorously.
- Leaders provide a curriculum that gives pupils an understanding of how to stay safe in many aspects of their lives. Pupils talk confidently about welfare issues and know whom to talk to if they have concerns about their well-being.
- Staff training is up to date and all staff demonstrate a commitment to pupils' welfare.

The personalised nature of the curriculum and the close dialogue with personal coaches ensures that individual needs, including personal welfare, are continually addressed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement as there is variance in the quality between and within subjects. In mathematics, computer science and for some pupils in science, progress is not good enough.
- Teacher questioning does not consistently probe pupils' responses or tackle misconceptions swiftly enough. Work does not consistently challenge middle-ability and the most able pupils. In books and folders, the positive work exploring new ideas and themes are not always balanced by sufficient opportunities to apply those concepts to assessment tasks.
- The teaching in some subjects enables pupils to make stronger progress, as teachers have high expectations and set challenging tasks that prompt pupils' deeper understanding. In English, pupils closely considered the context of the first world war by discussing images and personal experiences. This was used to give purpose to their exploration of Wilfred Owen's poetry. In art, pupils explored a range of artists and mediums, before engaging with work to craft their own styles and techniques.
- Project-based learning creates meaningful connections between subjects and business partners. In English and art, pupils explored Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein' to explore how emotions could be reflected in words and images. In other projects, pupils were invited to design a promotional poster for the NHS that they presented to an audience of NHS professionals, with the winning work used in a subsequent campaign.
- Personal coaches work closely with pupils to develop their self-confidence, independence and a range of wider personal and employability skills. Pupils value the impact of this on their personal development. Collaborations with working partners provide unique learning experiences that make learning relevant, purposeful and engaging.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. All staff are committed to the personal and social development of the pupils in their care. Pupils value the 'amazing' support they receive in a school where 'everybody knows you' and meets your needs'. 'It goes beyond teaching – it is like a family' reflects a typical comment from pupils.
- Pupils value the work-based experience with school business partners that develops their confidence and understanding of what work looks like. They feel safe on their placements as teachers, coaches and business engagement officers regularly visit and pupils know whom to call if a problem arises.
- Pupils benefit from an effective programme to raise their awareness of personal, social and health issues that is delivered through assemblies, tutorials and project-based

learning. Leaders do not shy away from challenging issues and ensure that important welfare issues are openly discussed and explored with pupils.

- The majority of pupils demonstrate a positive approach to learning in many lessons. They are well focused, although some pupils are reluctant to answer questions in class and are not equipped with the skills to take full advantage of tasks without close teacher direction.
- Pupils state that the school takes action to help them to stay safe in school and in the wider community. They describe how the curriculum helps them learn how to stay safe online, on the road and in their personal relationships.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' behaviour on corridors and around the site is polite and they show consideration for one another and other adults. Pupils share the lunch hall with pupils from a nearby school and show considerable respect and courtesy.
- Behaviour in lessons is typically good and pupils say low-level disruption rarely affects their learning. Incidents of bullying are extremely rare. Pupils are confident that their teachers and coaches act swiftly to address any such incidents.
- Leaders have robust procedures in place to support attendance. In 2015/16, the attendance of those pupils who did not attend regularly enough significantly improved. Pupils feel personally valued and appreciate their learning. Attendance has also improved for key groups of pupils, but it remains below the levels seen nationally.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- While outcomes are improving in a number of areas, pupils do not make consistently strong progress in a wide range of subjects. Work over time in books shows that, while pupils make strong progress in subjects such as English and art, it is counterbalanced by slower progress in mathematics, science, geography and computer science.
- New staff appointments are leading to some improvements in the quality of teaching in mathematics. However, pupils' rates of progress remain too slow because pupils are not consistently challenged.
- The most able and middle-ability pupils, including middle-ability disadvantaged pupils, make slower progress as work is not always pitched at appropriate levels and they are not given sufficient opportunities to apply their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- However, pupils make good progress over time in their project-based work as they are able to find meaningful connections between subjects and themes and apply them in innovative and creative ways.
- The progress that disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make is not good enough compared to pupils with similar starting points nationally.
- New leadership structures for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have enhanced the quality of provision. This is contributing well to pupils' improving progress in English, but their progress in mathematics is still weaker.

- Pupils are increasingly well prepared for the next stage of their education. In 2016, all pupils progressed to education, employment or further training. However, for some pupils, their readiness is hampered because of weaker progress in mathematics.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Leaders have an over-rosy view of the progress that some students are making. The progress that some students make is not good enough. From varied starting points, the first cohort of students made good progress in art, sports studies and the extended project qualification. Their progress in product design and computing was weaker. Current in school assessment information also shows a variable picture in terms of the progress that students are making in both academic and applied courses.
- Students without GCSE grades A* to C in English at the end of Year 11 were more successful than students nationally in progressing towards achieving a grade C in 2016. Students without a grade C in mathematics made weaker progress towards this goal, although all showed improvement.
- Teacher expectations vary from classroom to classroom. There are times when work is poorly presented or incomplete and not all teachers consistently tackle this. Work in students' books, especially in mathematics, shows that progress remains too variable.
- Leaders are building a 16 to 19 study programme that enriches students' academic and vocational study with two days' weekly work experience, which enables students to apply their learning and develop key employability skills.
- Leaders have taken steps to develop the wider skills of sixth-form students. Through their work with business mentors, students develop communication and critical thinking skills that support their learning and their academic and vocational studies. The majority of students follow appropriate study programmes.
- Careers advice and guidance is a strength. Students have continual access to the workplace and ongoing dialogue with a range of employers. The school guarantees all students either a place at university, an apprenticeship or employment. In, 2016 all students progressed to education, employment or further training.
- Retention rates for Year 12 students have been below that found nationally but are improving over time. All students who joined Year 13 in September 2016 are continuing with their studies so far this year and virtually all did so last year.
- Students value their 16 to 19 courses and the quality of support they receive from their teachers and coaches. One ex-student described how the school had supported him in creating a pop-up restaurant for over 40 guests at school and that this had contributed to his subsequent study for a degree in hospitality and catering. Another student showed how a current placement was leading directly to study for a foundation degree.

School details

Unique reference number	140965
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10023795

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy studio school
Age range of pupils	13 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	157
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	59
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr S Hanson
Principal	Mrs Val Wigham
Telephone number	0191 481 3710
Website	www.studiowestnewcastle.com
Email address	admin@studiowest.newcastle.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Studio West is a studio school. It opened in September 2014. Much of the learning is based upon active collaboration between the school and over 150 business partners, who provide contexts in which pupils can develop and apply a range of skills, including teamwork, critical thinking and wider life skills.

- Pupils follow projects set in real-life contexts that explore connections between subjects and skills as well as more established subjects, such as English, mathematics and science.
- In Year 10 and in the sixth form, pupils carry out regular work experience.
- Studio West is much smaller than the average secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the usual time is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The school is part of the Kenton Multi-Academy Trust.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a wide range of lessons across the school and were accompanied by the principal and deputy principal on the first morning of the original inspection.
- Meetings were held with the principal, vice-principal, the data manager and the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector also met the chair of the governing body and two other governors and the chief executive of the multi-academy trust. The lead inspector talked to a group of pupils at lunchtime.
- A meeting was also held with the business engagement manager who oversees the studio school's links with business partners. An inspector accompanied him on visits to two work placements.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons, lunchtimes and breaktimes.
- Inspectors talked to groups of pupils in Years 9 and 11. They also held meetings with three Year 12 students and an ex-Year 13 student currently studying for a foundation degree.
- Inspectors examined the quality of work in books and reviewed school tracking information. Inspectors discussed pupils' work and their learning with them in lessons.
- Inspectors looked at the school's work and considered documents including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan and information relating to pupil achievement and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took into account 10 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey, six free text responses and 19 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- On 2 March 2017, an additional visit was made to the school by Phil Smith and Margaret Farrow, two of Her Majesty's Inspectors, to gather additional evidence due to an incomplete inspection. The visit focused on leadership and management and the sixth form.
- During the additional inspection visit inspectors observed students learning in the sixth form and had additional meetings with the principal, senior leaders, governors and the chief executive of the trust.

Inspection team

Malcolm Kirtley, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sarah MacDermott	Ofsted Inspector
Iain Veitch	Ofsted Inspector
Phil Smith	Her Majesty's Inspector
Margaret Farrow	Her Majesty's Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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