

Green Gates Academy

Melton Road, Stockton-on-Tees TS19 0JD

Inspection dates

27–28 June 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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across the school. Pupils' work, especially in mathematics, is not challenging because teachers' expectations of their pupils are not high enough.
- Some of the school's information about pupils' attainment and progress is not accurate. The progress seen in pupils' books does not match the school's assessment information consistently well. This makes it difficult for leaders to judge trends in pupils' progress confidently.
- Although leaders check the work in pupils' books regularly, their feedback to teachers and to the trust about pupils' progress is not sufficiently detailed.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics, an identified priority for school improvement, lags behind their progress in reading and writing. Teachers' mathematical subject knowledge requires further development.
- Despite recent appointments, directors have not ensured that leaders have sufficient capacity to fulfil their specified duties. Only one member of staff, other than the vice-principal, oversees a subject area.
- The school's sex and relationships education curriculum is not delivered in a timely enough manner for the pupils who attend the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders make effective provision for pupils' social, emotional and mental health. Pupils are happy in school. Their attendance is much higher than in their previous schools.
- Additional government funding is spent wisely. Leaders ensure that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and children looked after, receive bespoke and high-quality pastoral support.
- Computing is strong. Pupils are enthralled and enthusiastic in lessons. They can explain the complex algorithms used in coding.
- Pupils feel safe in school because they have trust in the staff. They know how to get help if they are bullied and understand how to keep themselves safe online.
- The very small number of key stage 1 pupils make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' outcomes by:
 - developing teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics
 - ensuring that teachers have the very highest expectations of their pupils and provide work which challenges pupils to do their very best.
- Develop the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - establishing a robust and reliable system for analysing pupils' attainment and progress
 - ensuring that a wider range of adults oversee specific aspects of the school's curriculum
 - giving more precise feedback to teachers about pupils' progress following checks on pupils' workbooks.
- Promote pupils' social, emotional and mental health further by:
 - reviewing the timing of the delivery of sex and relationships education.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders check on the work of the school diligently. However, they do not identify precisely which aspects of pupils' work have improved when judging progress. For example, on one occasion, leaders' feedback described progress in writing to be 'excellent'. It did not indicate which aspects of writing, in particular, were leading to excellent progress.
- The school's systems and procedures for recording and analysing the progress made by individual pupils and groups of pupils are not robust and lack reliability. For example, inspectors noted that the tracking data shows that some pupils have made two years' progress in reading and science in just two terms. This rapid progress was not evident in pupils' workbooks.
- Directors have not ensured that senior leaders have the capacity in terms of time to fulfil their demanding roles. They acknowledge that the principal and vice-principal are 'stretched'. There are very few opportunities for staff, other than the principal and vice-principal, to develop their practice and skills by overseeing curriculum areas.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupil voice is strong in curriculum development. For example, pupils presented their work on the development of a new school library to the directors before a board meeting. Pupils are encouraged to take part in outdoor learning, cultural visits and sporting events through a children's university rewards initiative. This encourages pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education beyond the confines of the classroom. The curriculum for sex and relationships education is not delivered in a timely enough manner for some of the most vulnerable pupils in the school.
- The new principal, following observations of lessons and checks on pupils' progress, took timely and effective action to develop teachers' skills in behaviour management further. Systems and procedures to manage behaviour are strong.
- Pupils have a rudimentary knowledge of democracy. They take part in democratic elections in school. Pupils understand the rule of law. They know the difference between right and wrong. They acknowledge that some prejudicial name-calling goes on in the playground when pupils become angry or upset. Leaders were not aware of this issue prior to the inspection. Older pupils have a sound knowledge of issues such as apartheid through their cross-curricular work on South Africa.
- Leaders appreciate the support of the school's external improvement adviser (SIA). Her comprehensive reports outline the school's strengths and some areas for development. For example, the SIA had identified the need to review the timeliness of the school's sex and relationships education prior to the inspection.
- Leaders spend the additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities well. They make good provision for the development of pupils' social, emotional and mental health. Children looked after and their foster carers appreciate the monthly 'foster buddies' club immensely. The pupils and their carers meet with other foster families to share experiences and support each other in a safe and secure environment.

- Leaders have ensured that the teaching assistant workforce is highly effective. Teaching assistants support teaching and learning. They access regular training, take part in appraisal procedures, prepare risk assessments and oversee transition arrangements. They also contribute to the assessments of pupils' social, emotional and mental health.
- The vice-principal, in her role as special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), works proactively with a number of external agencies to ensure that pupils access appropriate and timely help and support. The provision for pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs is strong.
- The physical education and sport funding for primary schools is spent judiciously to ensure that all pupils learn how to evaluate risk and know when to take safe risks, for example through their participation in kayaking, white-water rafting and outdoor learning.
- The additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils is used well. Pupils' readiness to learn in the morning is enhanced because they eat a 'healthy start breakfast' financed by the pupil premium. In addition, there is a 100% take-up by the pupils of the club that is offered by the school during holiday periods.

Governance of the school

- Governance is strong. Directors from the Horizons Specialist Academy Trust support and challenge leaders at a strategic level. The trust-wide systems and procedures are strong. Policies, for example, are up to date and relevant. Directors have a thorough knowledge of the school through formal visits to see the staff and pupils at work and through information received from the chief executive officer. Minutes of committee meetings show robust challenge through insightful questions asked by directors. The scheme of delegation is extremely clear and outlines the duties and responsibilities most succinctly.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's record of recruitment checks is compliant with requirements.
- All staff have up-to-date training in safeguarding and child protection. They are fully aware of the signs of abuse and know the procedures to be followed should abuse be disclosed. The designated safeguarding lead ensures that referrals are reported, recorded and followed up appropriately.
- Staff liaise with individual parents and carers on a daily basis. Parents trust the staff implicitly and inform the school of any happenings at home that may affect their child's behaviour at school. A parent reported that, 'Our boy feels very safe at school.'

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent across the school. Most teachers have very high expectations of their pupils, plan challenging work, ask

demanding questions and set ambitious targets. However, some teachers do not follow senior leaders' high expectations. These teachers do not engage pupils well in their learning.

- Improving standards in mathematics is a whole school priority currently. Pupils are making more rapid progress in mathematics this year because the training that teachers have attended is beginning to bear fruit. However, leaders understand the need for further training to ensure that the work teachers plan for pupils is at exactly the right level of difficulty.
- Pupils told the inspectors that they really enjoy science lessons because they are asked thought-provoking questions and are given the time to carry out interesting investigations. As a result, their workbooks show that they make rapid progress as their confidence grows.
- Similarly, pupils enjoy and make rapid progress in computing. Adults in key stage 1 ensure that the pupils are proficient in the use of handheld computers. In key stage 2, the standard of coding is high. Pupils in lower key stage 2 are able to explain complex coding algorithms. Year 6 pupils are able to design and code a viable two-person game.
- Teachers and teaching assistants throughout the school act in accordance with the school's behaviour policies and procedures. Adults' practice is consistent. This means that the pupils attending this specialist provision know the boundaries and expectations. This certainty gives them the security to let down their barriers and learn.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well. They make a valuable contribution to pupils' progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' physical health is promoted through a wide range of outdoor educational experiences. The pupils particularly appreciate the opportunities they have to play football matches against other schools. Leaders ensure that all pupils access a healthy and nutritious breakfast to set them up for the day ahead.
- Senior leaders cultivate an ethos of respect, success and aspiration. They set great store by therapeutic and sensory interventions to address pupils' individual problems. Pupils appreciate the bespoke activities that staff provide. They grow in confidence as their behaviour improves and they begin to achieve success.
- Pupils know what constitutes bullying. They understand the repeated nature of bullying, whether it be verbal, physical or cyber bullying. They have confidence that the adults in school are able to sort out any bullying that may occur.
- Pupils know how to stay safe online. They understand the dangers of giving out personal information and know the importance of privacy settings.
- Occasionally, pupils are frightened when, as one pupil put it, 'a pupil goes mad'. Staff record all behavioural incidents appropriately in accordance with the school's policies.

Numbers of incidents and trends in numbers of incidents are reported to the directors on a termly basis. Incidents of poor behaviour are reducing over time.

- Many of the pupils who attend the school have suffered severe trauma in their early lives. These pupils require more timely provision of sex and relationships education.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good in this specialist provision.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in and around the school. They respond well to the consistent behavioural expectations of all school staff. Pupils have been taught to identify their own emotional well-being on the school's 'incredible five-point scale'. They know when to access a quiet place of safety to calm down and reflect.
- Pupils' attendance is significantly above the average attendance of pupils in special schools. Very few pupils are persistently absent. Pupils enjoy school because they feel valued and respected. A parent told an inspector, 'My child was known as a naughty child at her previous school. Her confidence has grown at Green Gates because she is valued and encouraged.'
- Pupils told the inspectors that they hear the term 'gay boy' occasionally in the playground during breaktimes. They understand that this is unacceptable. Pupils are confident that leaders take appropriate action to address the issue in a timely manner.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils, all of whom have an education, health and care plan, enter the school with sizeable gaps in their knowledge, skills and abilities because of huge disruptions to their early education. Over time, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 has remained below national expectations in English and mathematics. Currently, not enough pupils in key stage 2 are making good progress in reading, writing and especially mathematics. Although the gap is diminishing between the progress made by pupils in mathematics and English, it is still too wide.
- The very small number of pupils in key stage 1 make good progress from their individual starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. The majority reach the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 2.
- The standards pupils reach in reading are beginning to rise. There is a positive culture of reading in the school. The pupils have just developed a new library. Each pupil gets an opportunity to read with an adult every day. Currently, pupils are making more rapid progress in the development of their reading skills.
- Pupils across the school make good progress towards reaching standards appropriate for their age in subjects such as science and computing.
- Disadvantaged pupils in both key stages, including children looked after, make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their starting points.
- The improvement in pupils' behaviour over time is strong. Pupils make good progress in managing their own behaviours. A sizeable minority transition into mainstream secondary schooling at the end of Year 6.

School details

Unique reference number	141384
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10031911

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	40
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Colin Whittaker
Principal	Melanie Lyons
Telephone number	01642 570 104
Website	www.horizonstrust.org.uk
Email address	greengates@horizonstrust.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Green Gates Academy is an academy special converter school. It opened on 1 September 2014. The school is supported by the Horizons Specialist Academy Trust, a multi-academy trust.
- Green Gates Academy provides education for pupils with severe social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school currently caters for 40 pupils aged from five to 11 years and supports four local authorities in the north east region.
- Half of the pupils are disadvantaged and an eighth are children looked after by a local

authority, much greater proportions than seen nationally.

- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. There are significantly more boys than girls on roll.
- A new principal took up her position at the beginning of the current academic year. A new assistant vice-principal took up post in January 2017.
- An external school improvement adviser visits the school at regular intervals to assess the school's strengths and areas for further development.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons across a wide range of subjects in all year groups. Observations were carried out jointly with the principal and the vice-principal on the first day of the inspection.
- During visits to lessons, inspectors spoke with pupils and looked at their workbooks to find out more about how well they were learning. An inspector read with five pupils from Years 1, 2 and 6.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. Formal meetings were held with two groups of key stage 2 pupils. The inspectors noted the responses of eight pupils to Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- Additional meetings were held with senior leaders, the trust's chief executive officer and four directors. The lead inspector also talked to the school's external improvement adviser by telephone.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school more broadly and looked at a range of documentation. This included policies and improvement plans relating to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, curriculum, behaviour and safeguarding.
- The lead inspector and principal scrutinised pupils' achievement information from the school's assessment tracking system on the first day of the inspection. The lead inspector, principal, vice-principal and Year 6 teacher scrutinised additional data from a different assessment tracking system on the second day of the inspection.
- One of the inspectors met with parents dropping their children off at school on the first morning of the inspection. The inspectors took account of the seven parental free-text responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, together with a survey of parental views carried out by the school.
- The 14 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff were taken into account. An inspector held a discussion with a group of teaching assistants.

Inspection team

Belita Scott, Lead inspector

George Gilmore

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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