

Inspection of Consett Academy

Ashdale Road, Consett, County Durham DH8 6LZ

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 May 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and staff at Consett Academy share high expectations for pupils' achievement and conduct. Pupils are proud of their large, welcoming school. Behaviour throughout the academy is positive. Staff regularly praise pupils for their efforts inside and outside of the classroom. Pupils value the support and care shown by staff.

Pupils know that if they have a concern, staff will act quickly to address it. Bullying is rare. Pupils are confident to report it when it does occur. Leaders promote a strong sense of community through the 'Consett Way'. This set of values helps pupils understand what it means to be an active and responsible citizen. 'Student Ambassadors' work alongside school leaders to improve the school environment. Their responsibilities include collecting litter, helping other pupils at lunchtime and seeking out ways to improve the school further through pupil voice.

Leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement at the school. They have acted quickly to address previous weaknesses in curriculum design, attendance monitoring and quality assurance processes. More remains to be done to ensure that specific groups of pupils get the best education possible. This includes some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those attending alternative provision.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that prepares pupils well for their next stage in education, employment or training. The curriculum covers a broad range of topics. Leaders have considered the context of the school in curriculum planning. Careful choices have been made about what pupils will learn and in what order. Opportunities for staff to revisit important content are included within the curriculum. However, the way in which the curriculum is adapted for pupils with SEND is less well considered. Leaders know this is the case.

Pupils' classroom experience is becoming more consistent. Staff that need additional support to improve their practice have been given appropriate support. Leaders have provided specific training focused on high-quality teaching strategies. As a result, pupils' experience within the classroom is improving. Students in the sixth form engage in activities and discussions which develop a good depth of knowledge and understanding of their chosen subjects. Outcomes for these students are improving over time.

Staff assess pupils' understanding of the curriculum regularly. Staff ask well-considered questions to ensure that pupils understand the important aspects of each lesson. Gaps in pupils' knowledge are identified quickly. The feedback pupils receive helps them to improve their understanding of the curriculum over time. Students in the sixth form are well supported to develop the depth of knowledge and skill they require for post-16 education.

An inclusive approach for pupils with SEND is a priority for leaders. Staff understand the pastoral needs of these pupils well. Plans with specific targets for each pupil with SEND are in place. However, pupils' cognition and learning needs are not consistently well met. Staff do not have a strong understanding of how to adapt lessons to meet all pupils' needs. As a result, pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they might.

A clear strategy to improve pupils' literacy has been implemented by leaders. This includes a focus on important vocabulary in lessons and daily opportunities for reading a range of texts. Pupils at an early stage of learning to read receive specific interventions that develop their phonics knowledge. This whole-school approach is beginning to have a significant impact on pupils' literacy levels across the school.

Pupils have daily 'Aspire' lessons to support their wider development. Leaders have designed a curriculum that includes important messages about staying safe, being healthy and cultural diversity. Debate and discussion are an important feature of these lessons. However, not all staff are confident to lead conversations related to the topics taught. As a result, some pupils have had less opportunity to engage in this curriculum than others. Their understanding of the important messages it contains, especially of fundamental British values, is limited.

A varied programme of extra-curricular opportunities is available to all pupils at the school. Leaders monitor attendance closely and ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to take part in enrichment activities. However, students in the sixth form do not engage in enrichment as widely as younger pupils.

Staff are well supported by leaders who consider their workload and well-being when making changes at the school. Governors have suitable skills and knowledge to hold leaders to account. Training for all staff, including early career teachers, is of a high quality. Senior leaders' oversight of most aspects of the school is strong. However, in relation to pupils attending alternative provision, this is not the case. Leaders' records do not demonstrate that they have regularly monitored the suitability of the provision and evaluated its impact on the pupils who attend. This means that some pupils are not benefiting from this provision as well as they might.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff understand the risks that pupils may face, both in person and online. They know that raising a concern, however small, is essential to keep pupils safe. Leaders act on any such concerns that are raised. They involve pupils, families and external agencies to ensure that swift and appropriate action is taken. The well-being of pupils is a high priority to everyone at the school, including those responsible for governance.

Pupils understand how to stay safe. They know there is an adult to speak to if they have a concern. Leaders have created a curriculum that teaches pupils how to stay

safe. Students in the sixth form also receive age-appropriate messages about personal safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Adaptations to the curriculum and approaches to teaching are not well adapted to meet the needs of all pupils with SEND. This is particularly the case for those with cognition and learning needs. The impact of the curriculum for pupils with SEND is limited by these weaknesses in curriculum planning and implementation. As a result, pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they might. Leaders should review the appropriateness of the curriculum for pupils with SEND. Leaders must also ensure that ongoing training and quality assurance take place to ensure that teaching meets the needs of all pupils, especially those with cognition and learning needs.
- Opportunities for debate are limited in some lessons. Pupils are not always encouraged to engage in discussion about topics that are important to their personal development. This is particularly the case during lessons which form part of the 'Aspire' curriculum. As a result, pupils' understanding of British values, the protected characteristics and other topics that prepare them for life in modern Britain is not as strong as it could be. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the skills and knowledge to support pupils' discussions about important aspects of the curriculum. This includes allowing pupils to debate, discuss and engage in topics which are important to their development as responsible and active citizens.
- Leaders' oversight of alternative provision that pupils from the school attend is not as strong as it should be. As a result, leaders do not have a strong understanding of the suitability of these placements for the pupils who attend them. Leaders must ensure that systems and processes for selecting, monitoring and evaluating alternative provision placements are more robust. This includes satisfying themselves that all safeguarding, curriculum and well-being requirements are met at all settings that pupils attend. Information should be regularly shared with those responsible for governance so that appropriate support and challenge are provided to senior leaders responsible for this aspect of the school's work.

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' 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.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 137638 |
| Local authority | Durham |
| Inspection number | 10277793 |
| Type of school | Secondary Comprehensive |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| 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 | 1,617 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 128 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Karl Fairley |
| Principal | Tom Urwin |
| Website | www.consett-academy.org.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 11 and 12 March 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the principal is new to post. He joined the school in December 2021. Several other members of the senior leadership team at the school are new.
- The school joined the New College Durham Academies Trust in 2018.
- The school makes use of eight off-site providers of alternative education. One of these is a registered provider and subject to inspection by Ofsted. Seven are unregistered.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the principal, senior leaders and representatives of the trust. Inspectors spoke to teaching and non-teaching staff, in addition to representatives of the local governing body and trust board. The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer.
- To evaluate the quality of education, deep dives were carried out in English, mathematics, science, geography and physical education. Inspectors spoke with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, looked at books and spoke to both pupils and staff.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for careers education at the school.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experience in lessons, enrichment opportunities and what it is like to attend the school.
- Inspectors met with early career teachers and those who mentor them.
- Inspectors examined the school's behaviour records, spoke to pupils who had been suspended from school and spoke with providers of alternative education.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator. They looked at a range of documentation, including education, health and care plans and individual learning plans. Inspectors also checked how pupils with SEND are supported in lessons. One inspector visited the nurture classroom within the school.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, including checks made on all adults who come on to the school site. Inspectors spoke with pupils and staff to ensure their understanding of safeguarding procedures. An inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to check on their work to keep pupils safe in school.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's parent, pupil and staff surveys, including free-text responses.

Inspection team

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|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| John Linkins, lead inspector | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Catherine Beard | Ofsted Inspector |
| Karen Gammack | Ofsted Inspector |
| Angela White | Ofsted Inspector |
| Kieran McGrane | Ofsted Inspector |

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