

# Biddick Academy

Biddick Lane, Washington, Tyne and Wear NE38 8AL

## Inspection dates

10–11 May 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Requires improvement**

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected as an academy

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' progress in lessons and across subjects has been too variable. Pupils have made no better than average progress in English and mathematics and significantly less progress in science, modern foreign languages and humanities.
- Pupils currently in the school have begun to make better progress, but some inconsistencies remain. The attainment of disadvantaged pupils is currently still well below that of other pupils in the school.
- Not enough pupils are making more than expected progress because they are not consistently provided with work that stretches and challenges them to think deeply.
- Although improving, some weaknesses remain in the quality of teaching. Marking and feedback is not always clear enough and some work set is mundane and fails to stretch the most-able pupils.
- Levels of attendance are no better than average and some disadvantaged pupils still miss school too often, adversely affecting the progress they make.
- Some middle leaders need further training to develop the necessary skills to drive improvements in teaching and learning within their areas of responsibility.
- Lack of effective accountability systems and weak management of teachers' performance allowed, until recently, underperformance to go unchecked. New performance management arrangements and better line management has begun to address this.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers have an accurate understanding of what needs to change. They have well-developed plans in place that are bringing about the necessary improvements.
- Leaders have created a positive climate for improvement. Members of staff are on board and working hard to deliver better rates of pupil progress across the curriculum.
- Good training and professional development is rapidly addressing inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Teaching is now good.
- Pupils are safe, behave well and develop as well-rounded young people. Almost all go on to secure places in further education, employment or training.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress pupils make across the curriculum at key stages 3 and 4 and raise levels of attainment by:
  - addressing the remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching
  - ensuring that the best practice in marking and feedback is shared across departments
  - ensuring that curriculum content is sufficiently challenging and stretching
  - further developing pupils' attitudes to learning so that they are increasingly motivated to succeed
  - maintaining a relentless focus on the progress of disadvantaged pupils, to help them reach their full potential, so that the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils in the school rapidly narrows.
  
- Further improve attendance, especially the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.
  
- Strengthen the role of middle leaders so that they have greater influence and accelerate the pace of progress across the school.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The current headteacher has led the school since September 2014. During this time, he has implemented a programme of change that is systematically addressing the weaknesses that allowed a decline in standards, following the previous inspection in 2012. He and other leaders have created a climate in which standards of behaviour and the quality of teaching are improving. Members of staff at all levels are very much on board and there is a shared commitment to driving improvement. As a result, standards have begun to rise and inconsistencies across subjects are being addressed.
- Leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses well because they make regular and varied checks on the quality of teaching and on pupils' achievement. They gather and use information on pupils' progress well to hold members of staff to account. More rigorous management of teachers' performance is ensuring that only effective teaching is rewarded with pay progression. Teachers are supportive of the tighter accountability framework, as they are benefiting from good feedback on their performance and supportive professional development opportunities.
- The impact of curriculum leaders is variable. Some provide effective leadership, but others lack the necessary skills to drive improvements in the quality of teaching and in ensuring that the curriculum they provide is sufficiently stretching and challenging.
- Weaker teaching is now challenged and supported effectively. A good coaching programme, for example, is helping teachers to improve weaker aspects of their practice.
- Because senior leaders have an accurate grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses, they have well-thought-out plans for improvement in place. These plans include the intention to introduce a revised curriculum from September 2016. Leaders have recognised that some subjects require more teaching time in key stage 3 and English and mathematics require more time at key stage 4 to deliver consistently good rates of progress. A strength of the curriculum, which will be retained, is the way in which it meets pupils' interests effectively, through the inclusion of a broad vocational offer linked to the local jobs market.
- Leaders have also carefully reviewed how they assess pupils' progress and have prepared a new approach to assessment linked to the new national curriculum. This too will be implemented from September 2016.
- Leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to inclusion and equal opportunities through their work to support pupils who have special educational needs or disability. Parents of pupils that attend the Unity Centre spoke passionately to inspectors about the extremely positive impact the provision has on their children's development. Parents more widely are supportive of the school. Almost all parents that responded to Ofsted's online survey said that they would recommend the school and consider it to be well led and managed.
- Leaders and governors are making effective use of the pupil premium. Disadvantaged pupils have begun to make better progress and assessment information indicates that they are on track to attain better outcomes in 2016. However, their attainment is still lagging well behind that of other pupils in the school and this gap in attainment is not closing as fast as leaders would like.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They are polite, respectful and tolerant of one another. All pupils receive a well-planned programme of personal, social, health and economic learning delivered by a specialist team. The programme ensures that pupils are aware of risks, including the dangers of misusing digital technologies and from radicalisation and extremism. Pupils know what actions to take to protect themselves. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strong feature of the school. Foreign exchanges and international visits enrich the curriculum and provide strong vehicles for the development of pupils' cultural awareness.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governors strike a good balance between nurturing the new leadership team and challenging them to address weaknesses in the school's performance. They have a clear vision for the school's development and are working strategically to secure sustainable change for the long-term improvement of the school.
  - Governors' experience has been instrumental in supporting the development of a new accountability framework. They are overseeing the introduction of more robust performance management arrangements and take an active role in decisions on teachers' pay progression.

- Governors also attend line management meetings to observe how curriculum leaders are held to account. Their feedback is helping to shape the nature of these meetings.
- Governors track key performance indicators at regular points across the year. As a result, they are well informed about the school's progress.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Stringent checks are made to ensure that only suitable adults are employed to work in the school. Regular training on child protection is provided for all members of staff. Safeguarding policies are up to date and available on the school website. Staff know what actions to take if they have concerns about a pupil's welfare. The school has employed its own specialist staff who work closely with parents to support vulnerable pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs, and to help pupils with poor attendance reintegrate back into the school.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good because leaders' actions are addressing much of the variability in the quality of teaching that limited pupil progress in some subjects in the past. In addition, the tighter management of teachers' performance has been instrumental in raising expectations.
- There is still a minority of teaching that lacks challenge and is typified by mundane tasks and, for example, too many worksheets. This teaching does not do enough to engage or stretch the most-able pupils. Leaders of teaching are aware of this and have good coaching partnerships in place to tackle the issue.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and teachers manage behaviour effectively in line with the new behaviour expectations introduced last September. As a result, disruptions to the flow of lessons are rare. Most pupils arrive promptly for lessons, settle quickly and apply themselves. However, some pupils tend to drift off task and work slowly when the work they are provided with fails to engage or challenge them.
- Most teachers now provide effective feedback to pupils. In some subjects, such as English and French, teachers have developed effective systems to ensure that pupils respond to the feedback and make improvements to their work, in accordance with the school's policy. In a few other subjects, such as science, pupils do not always understand the advice they are given and therefore are unable to act upon it.
- Most teachers use questioning effectively to assess pupils' level of understanding. In the strongest lessons, persistent and probing questioning ensures that pupils are required to think deeply and justify their answers. However, occasionally, teachers still do not check pupils' grasp of new content thoroughly enough before moving on.
- Since September 2015, teachers have focused on improving pupils' independence and self-organisation. Homework, which was rarely set in the past, is now set regularly and pupils are developing better work habits as a result. A further emphasis since September has been placed on developing pupils' reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. There are regular opportunities for pupils to read aloud in class and pupils listen very respectfully to one another's views during debates and discussions. Teaching is therefore contributing effectively to pupils' personal development. Careful checking of the impact of these initiatives has ensured that they are being delivered with a high degree of consistency.
- Additional adults provide strong support in lessons because they are well trained, knowledgeable and caring. In particular, pupils that attend the Unity Centre receive excellent help when in mainstream lessons.
- Weaker teaching in modern foreign languages and humanities in the past is rapidly being addressed and pupils are making better progress as a result. Good external support is ensuring that the teaching in these subjects now challenges pupils more consistently. Progress has been slower in science, however, where lower expectations are yet to be tackled.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupil's personal development and welfare is good. The school's decision to increase the number of pastoral leaders and to strengthen the health and well-being team has improved its capacity to provide good ongoing support for vulnerable pupils.

- Most pupils develop in self-confidence as they move through the school. They receive good careers guidance from Year 7 onwards which ensures that they know what options are available to them when they leave the school. There remains a minority of pupils, however, who are less aspirational and are yet to develop the drive and commitment to fulfil their potential. Leaders know this and are implementing initiatives to develop pupils' independence and self-reliance. The school makes effective use of local employers to support the development of work-related skills. A work discovery programme and innovation challenge contributes effectively to raising pupils' personal ambition.
- Positive relationships and a well-developed culture of mutual respect and tolerance ensure that bullying and the use of derogatory language is rare. Pupils are polite to one another, welcoming and friendly.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Provision has been carefully audited and gaps in coverage have been filled. There is a highly effective student leadership programme that encourages increased participation as pupils progress through the school. Through this programme many pupils undertake the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, take part in international exchanges with schools in Poland and New York or act as peer mentors to younger pupils.
- Very few pupils attend alternative provision. Appropriate checks are in place to ensure that those that do are safe and their attendance is monitored carefully.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They move around the school calmly and purposefully. At social times, pupils of different ages mix happily with one another. In the cafeteria, pupils abide by the rules, eating their lunches and tidying away with the minimum of fuss. They keep the site spotlessly clean and tidy and wear the uniform with pride.
- In lessons, most pupils display positive attitudes to learning and are ready and willing to take part actively. Pupils enjoy reading aloud and working in groups. For example, in a Year 8 music lesson, pupils collaborated effectively, using a range of instruments, to develop a jazz composition. Occasionally, when the teaching is less challenging or engaging, some pupils become passive and make little progress.
- Pupils and parents raise few concerns about behaviour. Pupils told inspectors that the introduction of the new behaviour management system last September has improved behaviour across the school. Members of staff apply sanctions consistently. The introduction of the new behaviour system coincided with a modest increase in the use of fixed-term exclusions, as higher expectations for behaviour were established.
- The positive actions of pastoral leaders, the attendance manager and the health and well-being team have improved attendance, which is now in line with the national average. Fewer pupils now miss school regularly, as a result of well-targeted action. Leaders' analysis of attendance data has revealed a close correlation between attendance and academic success for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, the team now focus more of their time on improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Nevertheless, there is further work to do to secure consistently good levels of attendance for all pupils.

### Outcomes for pupils

### require improvement

- Outcomes for pupils are not yet good because the progress they make in lessons and across subjects is still variable.
- Last year's Year 11 pupils entered the school with levels of attainment that were significantly below the national average. They left the school having made no better than expected progress in English and mathematics and significantly weaker progress in a number of other subjects areas, including science, humanities and modern foreign languages.
- Because rates of progress have been no better than average, and there was underperformance in different subjects, the proportion of pupils attaining five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, was below the national average in 2014 and 2015.
- Last year, disadvantaged pupils in Year 11 made significantly less progress than other pupils nationally. Leaders have focused particular attention on this group this year and current assessment information shows that disadvantaged pupils currently in the school have begun to make better progress, particularly in English. However, the gap between their predicted attainment and that of other pupils in the school remains relatively wide.
- The most-able pupils in the school make inconsistent progress because the work provided for them is not

always stretching and challenging. In mathematics they make better progress than other pupils, but their progress is no better than that of other pupils in English. Across some other subjects, their progress has been significantly weaker than that of other pupils nationally.

- The actions of leaders have begun to secure better rates of progress in most subjects. Current assessment information shows that the proportion of pupils on track to make expected progress in English and mathematics is rising. Leaders have also taken steps to address underperformance in humanities and modern foreign languages. Both subject areas expect better examination results in 2016. Science, however, continues to perform below expectations and too many pupils are currently attaining below their target.
- Pupils make broadly average progress across subjects in key stage 3. However, some groups of pupils begin to fall behind in English and mathematics in Years 8 and 9. Leaders are becoming increasingly adept at identifying when this happens and provide additional support to help pupils catch up. Nevertheless, leaders know that they need to make changes to the curriculum to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress and are well prepared to begin GCSE courses.
- Pupils that follow vocational programmes in key stage 4 benefit from excellent resources at the Harraton Centre and make good progress. The proportion of pupils from the school that secure apprenticeships is around twice the national average.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make strong progress because of the excellent support they receive, which helps them to integrate seamlessly into mainstream lessons. Pupils that attend the Unity Centre are helped to develop personal and social skills that prepare them well for life after leaving the school.
- While at the school, pupils receive good information and guidance to support their transition to the next phase of learning. Over the last three years, very few pupils have failed to secure a place in further education, employment or training.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139839
<b>Local authority</b>	Sunderland
<b>Inspection number</b>	10002757

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,085
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David McDonald
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Cowen
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 561 3680
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.biddickacademy.com">www.biddickacademy.com</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:info@biddickacademy.com">info@biddickacademy.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Biddick Academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is average. The pupil premium is additional government funding provided for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after.
- The school is a centre for specialist provision for autistic pupils. Currently it provides support for 33 pupils across Years 7 to 11.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disability is below average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or with an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The school currently has only two pupils that attend alternative provision. The alternative providers used by the school are The Link School and The Foundation of Light.
- The school website meets statutory requirements.
- The school meets the government's current floor targets, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 part lessons, of which a number were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. During these observations, inspectors sampled pupils' books and talked to pupils in order to evaluate the quality of current work. Inspectors also visited the Harraton Centre to observe the teaching of vocational courses and observed the general climate around the school at social times.
- Inspectors visited the Unity Centre, the school's additional resource provision for autistic pupils.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, a group of teachers and middle leaders and groups of pupils from key stages 3 and 4. Further meetings were held with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and four other governors, and an external consultant commissioned by the school to provide challenge and support to the leadership team.
- Inspectors also met a number of parents.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, policies, assessment information and records of checks on the quality of teaching. Inspectors looked at minutes of governing body meetings and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors took account of the 118 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and to the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

## Inspection team

Chris Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mike Maddison	Ofsted Inspector
Nigel Drew	Ofsted Inspector
Nick Merifield	Ofsted Inspector
Malcolm Kirtley	Her Majesty's Inspector

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