

Inspection of Seaham High School

Station Road, Seaham, County Durham SR7 0BH

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 July 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils told inspectors that Seaham High School is a safe place for them to learn. This school is a place where pupils can be themselves and where tolerance and respect are understood by the pupils who attend.

Pupils have a trusted adult in school and value the pastoral support and guidance that they receive. There are strong relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils know that there is somebody to talk to if they have a problem. The vast majority of pupils said that bullying is rare and that, if reported, it would be dealt with.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and many pupils rise to these expectations. Form teachers collect their classes from outside each day and ensure that they are ready to learn. Some pupils need more support than others to reach expected behaviour standards. Leaders ensure that these pupils are closely monitored, and they respond swiftly to any incidents.

Leaders provide many opportunities for pupils to develop their interests and talents. Rehearsals for the school musical were in full swing during the inspection. There is a great sense of pride from the pupils involved in this. Pupils are also proud to be school ambassadors. Pupils who are ambassadors feel that leaders listen to them.

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

Leaders and governors have considered the curriculum carefully. Alongside GCSEs, pupils can study several technical qualifications. Pupils are clear on the differences between these qualifications. They receive appropriate advice and guidance when selecting their key stage 4 programmes of study. The number of pupils studying the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) suite of subjects has increased of late.

At key stage 3, the vast majority of pupils study a curriculum that matches the aims and ambitions of the national curriculum. A small number of pupils follow a different pathway to ensure that they get additional support with literacy and numeracy. These pupils still have access to a broad and balanced curriculum and they move off this pathway once sufficient progress has been made.

Leaders have prioritised a sharp focus on curriculum development. Staff have accessed appropriate training to ensure that their subject curriculums are well sequenced and provide opportunities for pupils to revisit important knowledge. There is still some variability between subjects. Outcomes in creative arts GCSEs and vocational qualifications are currently higher than those in core and EBacc subjects. However, improvements to the curriculum and teaching in core and EBacc subjects have led to pupils knowing more and remembering more. Teachers use questioning skilfully to ensure that pupils develop their responses. This is most effective in subjects where curriculum development is fully embedded.

The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has increased significantly of late. Leaders have responded well to their needs. Staff support for pupils with SEND during lessons is effective. Pupils with SEND have access to safe and sensory-rich spaces in school. Leaders have worked hard to ensure that all staff understand how to support pupils with SEND. Leaders communicate with parents to share exactly what support is in place and why.

Leaders have provided support for some pupils who are behind in their reading skills. However, the range of support is currently underdeveloped and too few pupils access the right support. This means that some pupils do not catch up as quickly with their reading as they should.

There is an extensive programme of personal, health and social development lessons in place. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and keeping themselves safe online. The personal development programme prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain, although some pupils were able to discuss what this meant more clearly than others.

The vast majority of staff feel well supported by leaders and recognise the steps that leaders have taken to prioritise their well-being. Leaders at all levels have a clear vision and an understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a culture of safeguarding at the school. Staff receive regular training and there are clear systems for reporting concerns. The positive relationships between adults and pupils ensure that any concerns are recognised promptly. All staff are alert to the signs to be aware of, including catering and cleaning staff.

Record-keeping is clear and demonstrates that timely and appropriate actions take place. This includes work with external agencies. Leaders have appointed a number of additional staff to further safeguard pupils. This includes a school-based educational welfare officer and a mental health practitioner.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not fully developed the range of support that is required to help some pupils catch up with their reading. This includes older pupils who are weaker readers. Leaders should continue to widen and develop the range of support that they offer to pupils who are struggling to read. This is so that they can catch up quickly with their peers.
- Where the sequencing of the curriculum is not as fully developed, pupils' understanding of key concepts is less secure and pupils struggle to build on their

knowledge over time. Where curriculum practice is variable, leaders should continue to work with, and develop, those staff to ensure a more consistent approach. This is so that staff can ensure that pupils' grasp and recall of key knowledge and concepts are secure before moving on to new or more complex ideas.

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

Unique reference number	147711
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10268516
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,137
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gary Stout
Headteacher	Geoffrey Lumsdon
Website	http://www.seahamhighschool.com/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Eden Learning Trust.
- The school opened as an academy on 1st September 2020.
- The school uses alternative provision for 20 pupils. Pupils who attend full-time alternative provision attend registered alternative provision. Some pupils access unregistered alternative provision for one or two days a week.

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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. Inspectors met with leaders with responsibility for pupils with SEND, careers education, the

curriculum, personal, social and health education, behaviour, reading and pupils' wider development.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, mathematics, history and art.
- For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding. Inspectors looked at documentation related to safeguarding, including the school's records of reported incidents.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the local governing body and the trust.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for parents and staff.

Inspection team

Jessica McKay, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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Joanne Owens	Ofsted Inspector
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