

Studio West

West Denton Way, West Denton, Newcastle upon Tyne NE5 2SZ

Inspection dates

30 April–1 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal is passionate about her school and the pupils in her care. She is effective, focused and compassionate. Under her leadership, the school has seen steady and substantial improvement in outcomes.
- The principal is ably supported by the vice-principal and other members of her team. The trust and local governing body (LGB) are effective in supporting school leaders to further develop the school.
- The progress that pupils make by the time that they leave school has improved and is good. Similarly, students in the sixth form now make good progress from their starting points.
- Staff morale is high. Members of staff describe the school as being 'one team working together for the benefit of the pupils'.
- Pupils are happy and proud of their school. They describe their school as 'one big happy family'.
- Most pupils are courteous and polite. They behave well in and around the building. Most pupils focus well on their learning.
- There is a culture of safeguarding at school. Members of staff show a deep desire to help more vulnerable pupils. Systems and processes are effective and support them to this end.
- Teaching is characterised by strong relationships between pupils and teachers. Teachers question pupils well, listen carefully to their answers, and push them further to enhance their understanding. Sometimes, planning does not match the needs of different abilities, however. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Leaders know their school well. They know, for example, that rates of attendance are too low for some pupils. They are aware that standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar are also too low for some pupils.
- Many aspects of the curriculum are directly linked to business and the world of work. For example, at key stage 3, there is a focus on transferable skills such as communication and resilience. Across key stage 4, all pupils attend work placements for 12 weeks. In addition, students in the sixth form spend two days a week in a business environment.
- The vast majority of pupils leave school with ambitious plans for their future. Very few leave without places in further education, training or employment.
- The school is effective in its mission: it helps to develop young people who are 'skilled, confident, resilient and compassionate'.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of the standards of which pupils are capable
 - teachers' planning meets the needs of pupils with different abilities consistently well so that they make even stronger progress, including most-able pupils.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by monitoring the impact of strategies used to support pupils with SEND more effectively.
- Improve pupils' personal development behaviour and welfare, by:
 - making sure that pupils apply themselves and work productively in all classrooms
 - reducing the proportion of pupils with SEND that receive fixed-term exclusions
 - further improving rates of attendance.
- Improve the standards that pupils reach in spelling, punctuation and grammar across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal is effective, focused and compassionate. She is clearly passionate about the school and the pupils in her care. She is ably supported by the vice-principal, who is equally tenacious in wanting to improve the quality of education on offer.
- Leaders and managers have an accurate view of what is working well at school and where improvements are still needed. The principal and her team have a track record of school improvement. The quality of teaching is improving. The progress that pupils make throughout the school has improved both at key stage 4 and for students in the sixth form. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has decreased. Pupils now behave well at school. There is still some inconsistency, in that not all teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. Nonetheless, leaders have brought positive change to the school.
- Of note is the academy improvement plan. This is a helpful document that brings all aspects of school development together into one document. It is the basis upon which school leaders and members of the governing body ensure that members of staff are held accountable for their roles.
- As this is a studio school, there are many aspects of the curriculum that are directly linked to business and the world of work. For example, at key stage 3, pupils 'connect their learning' with other subjects by completing projects at different points across the year. What is more, there is an explicit focus on transferable skills, such as communication and resilience, in classrooms. Across key stage 4, all pupils attend work placements for 12 weeks. In addition, all pupils complete an applied qualification in business studies.
- This focus on the world of work helps pupils to focus on their studies when at school. Of note is that very few pupils leave school without firm plans for the future, in education, training or employment.
- The school uses additional finance to support disadvantaged pupils effectively. Since an external review of the pupil premium strategy, leaders have improved provision for these pupils. The progress that disadvantaged pupils make, and the standards that they reach, are improving.
- Staff morale is high. Members of staff told inspectors that 'everyone works together' for the good of the pupils and that the 'whole school feels like a team'. Members of staff appreciate the way in which leaders prioritise professional development. They also said that communication is strong across the school.
- School leaders monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment effectively. Information from these processes feeds into staff performance management. In addition to the findings of senior leaders, inspectors also noted that the strategies used to support pupils with SEND are not implemented consistently well across subjects.
- The systems used to check the rates of progress that pupils make and the standards that they reach are strong. Leaders are aware, for example, that the standards that pupils reach in spelling, punctuation and grammar in different subject areas are not strong enough. Leaders have also identified that rates of attendance wax and wane too

much. The principal and her team are not complacent, and plans are already in place to address these issues.

Governance of the school

- Governance has improved dramatically since the last inspection. Many trustees and members of the LGB are new. Governors and trustees bring a wide range of helpful and relevant experience to their roles. Current governors and trustees add significant capacity to school leadership.
- Members of the governing body use the academy improvement plan to challenge school leaders and hold them accountable in their efforts to improve the quality of provision. They do so on a regular basis. Governors receive useful and accurate information about the quality of teaching and the rates of progress that pupils are making. The chief executive officer helps to ensure that the information that is given to members of the governing body is accurate. As a result, governors know the strengths and areas for development for the school.
- Minutes from governing body meetings evidence a high level of understanding of the school. Clear challenges to the principal can be seen in order to further improve the quality of education on offer. It is also clear that members of the governing body care about individual pupils and are interested in how effectively the school caters for individual pupils' needs.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff training is up to date and members of staff receive regular safeguarding updates. They understand their responsibilities and deal with any safeguarding concerns in a timely manner. Staff are vigilant about child protection matters. Leaders ensure that pre-recruitment checks on the suitability of staff are thorough.
- What is more, members of staff go above and beyond policies and paperwork to ensure that pupils are safe. There is a deep desire to help the more vulnerable pupils. Regular briefings take place where members of staff are able to discuss emerging issues with individual pupils and share any concerns that they may have. These may be linked to academic progress, behavioural needs or safeguarding concerns. Members of the pastoral team then investigate potential problems and work to support these individuals. The work of the lead pastoral coach is pivotal here.
- Records are kept in good order. When there are safeguarding or child protection issues, leaders work effectively with external agencies to ensure pupils are as safe as possible. School leaders are tenacious in this endeavour.
- At school, there is a culture of helping pupils, whatever their need. For example, leaders became aware that some pupils were not eating breakfast before coming to school. Leaders then sourced additional funding and developed 'books and bagels' as part of the morning timetable. This provision encourages pupils to read books while having breakfast. All pupils benefit from this: both those who arrive not having eaten in the morning, as well as those that need further practice with their reading.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Most teachers ensure that pupils know exactly what is expected of them, both by way of level of focus in lessons and academic expectations. Predominantly, pupils are calm and their attitudes to learning are positive. Teachers listen intently to what pupils say and question them further to help deepen their understanding. Here, teachers have a good understanding of their subject and use this to enthuse pupils.
- A focus on business and interpersonal skills is pivotal to what the school does. The development of communication and enterprise skills, and the skill of applying additional knowledge, are embedded within lessons. This particularly helps pupils when they start work placements or leave school to enter employment or further education.
- Project-based learning and themes through the key stage 3 curriculum are generally effective in helping pupils to make links between subjects and build on prior knowledge. Here, they connect learning to other subjects or real-life situations, in line with the vision of the school.
- Learning happens across the year for pupils in key stage 4. For example, pupils attend school for an additional three weeks in any given year. School leaders have been able to use this additional time to give all pupils in key stage 4 access to a rich programme of 12 weeks' professional placements and work experience. All pupils also access the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.
- Where pupils have gaps in their knowledge, learning coaches offer programmes of additional support. Reading catch-up programmes, together with coaching designed to help individual pupils to focus in lessons, are having a positive impact on the progress that pupils make. The vision of the school to be 'word rich' and to help pupils to widen their vocabulary is increasingly effective.
- Most teachers are attuned to the needs of disadvantaged pupils and shape learning to meet their needs. On occasion, however, teachers do not push the most able pupils forward in their learning effectively. In addition, the planned strategies to help meet the needs of pupils with SEND are not always applied consistently well in different classrooms. A few teachers do not have high enough expectations of the standards that different groups of pupils can reach.
- The assessment system is understood by pupils. Their individual targets are 'alive' and these help them to understand their next steps. Pupils move from 'beginning, developing, approaching', to 'securing' and then 'mastering' skills and knowledge. This system is used consistently at school. Pupils can then extend their learning at home or during 'directed improvement and reflection time (DIRT)' sessions at the end of the day.
- As a result of the curriculum, the quality of its delivery and the support offered to teachers to further improve their practice, teaching, learning and assessment are good and continue to improve.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say that they feel valued and that adults at school listen to them. They say that they feel safe at school. Many pupils likened the school to 'one big family'. They told inspectors that nearly everyone is kind and that bullying is rare. They understand that bullying can take different forms, including in the form of cyber bullying. Pupils trust that adults could help to support them should any issues occur.
- In general, pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They concentrate in lessons. The focus on employability and work-based skills ensures that they understand the importance of learning. Occasionally, typically with newer members of staff, some pupils 'push their luck' and challenge boundaries. Here, they do not apply themselves in lessons as much as they do with other teachers.
- Pupils are taught about, and understand, the need to keep themselves healthy, both physically and emotionally. Physical education has a high priority at school. Many pupils study food technology and learn the importance of eating healthily.
- Pupils engage in a variety of topics through the personal, social and health education programme. Leaders shape the content covered to reflect local and regional issues. Knife crime has been covered recently, for example. Pupils were positive about the assembly programme. Inspectors agree that the assembly programme is well considered. Currently, pupils hear about famous people who have changed the course of history. Assembly themes are linked to tolerance, democracy and inclusion, and other values at the heart of British society.
- Pupils have access to a variety of leadership opportunities, and student leaders have an impact on the curriculum. For example, pupils have helped shape the assembly programme so that it includes a focus on animal welfare and on reducing the use of plastic straws for environmental reasons.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Behaviour around school is mostly calm and orderly. Pupils are polite, courteous and respectful of each other. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Pupils value what school has done for them; they are rightly proud of their school.
- Pupils understand the systems that are in place to ensure that behaviour in classrooms is positive. They understand the reward system and they also understand what will happen if they do not adhere to school rules. Leaders give due thought and attention to strategies that are used to manage the behaviour of pupils. They are reflective, and tweak systems in response to particular issues or potential flashpoints. School leaders analyse trends well and use this information to further improve systems to support pupils.
- As a result of these strategies, the proportion of pupils who have received fixed-term exclusions is below the national average and is decreasing further. School leaders know

that the proportion of pupils with SEND who receive fixed-term exclusions is too high. In addition, school records show that pupils with SEND are more likely to 'be on report'.

- The attendance team is having a positive impact on pupils' rates of attendance. For example, the number of pupils who are persistently absent has decreased considerably and is now below the national average. Members of staff work well with families and with individual pupils who struggle to attend school. There are many examples of how this work is having a positive impact on how often these pupils come to school. However, overall rates of attendance wax and wane too much.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The progress that pupils make by the time they reach the end of Year 11 has been improving over time. The progress that pupils made by the time they left Year 11 in 2018 was strong. Disadvantaged pupils and those who arrived at school with standards of attainment below the national average made strong progress.
- The profile of achievement for pupils leaving Year 11 has fluctuated over time, partly due to the high proportion of pupils starting school at times other than the beginning of the academic year. Currently, most pupils are making strong progress from their starting points. The proportion of pupils currently in Year 11 that started school at times other than the beginning of key stage 4 is very high.
- School leaders are aware of individual subject areas where pupils have historically made weaker progress. Their actions have improved the progress that pupils make, specifically in science, geography and computer science.
- At key stage 3, pupils make good progress across the curriculum. Pupils engage well in their learning. Teachers are increasingly effective at making links with other subjects to help to motivate pupils. Pupils' learning often culminates in a project where these links are made explicit. However, the standards that pupils reach in spelling, punctuation and grammar are not consistently strong.
- Most of the disadvantaged pupils make good progress. School leaders are increasingly effective at providing pastoral and academic support that removes any barriers that pupils have to learning. Additional support programmes, including support to develop fluency in reading, are effective. Pupils who arrive at school with standards of attainment below the national average also benefit from some of these additional support programmes.
- Every pupil takes an art subject as part of their core programme at key stage 4. This can include photography, graphics or art and design. The progress that pupils make in art is particularly strong.
- Pupils with SEND and the most able pupils at school make progress from their starting points. On occasion, the support these pupils receive in classrooms is not targeted well enough to ensure that they make the progress of which they are capable.
- School leaders explicitly focus on the development of wider skills in addition to academic progress. Pupils' development of employability and communication skills, and

their level of resilience, are encouraged and tracked. This forms part of the information that is shared with parents and carers on a regular basis.

- Leaders provide a variety of opportunities for pupils to develop their reading skills. The school's vision of becoming 'word rich' is increasingly effective. Teachers focus regularly on the development of a wider vocabulary within their subject. Additional computer-based programmes are used effectively to boost the skills of weaker readers. As a result, many pupils make good gains in their reading ages.
- As a result of the focus on employability skills, together with an understanding of the world of work, the proportion of pupils who leave school without employment or places on further education courses is low. Pupils leave school with firm and ambitious plans for the future.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The progress that students make in the sixth form is improving over time. In 2018, students left Year 13 having made good progress from their individual starting points. This includes the progress that students made both on A-level programmes and those on applied vocational programmes. Students who join the sixth form without having a grade 4 ('standard pass') or grade 5 ('strong pass') in GCSE English and mathematics improve their confidence in these subjects, and as a result, many improve their standards of attainment.
- Leaders have carefully planned courses to ensure that these meet the requirements of the post-16 study programme. Students benefit from a suitably broad range of academic and vocational pathways that match their diverse career aims.
- Teachers plan courses effectively and use information in relation to students' starting points well to adapt learning and to challenge them appropriately. Teachers make good use of their strong subject knowledge and experience to make learning interesting. They encourage students to become self-motivated and independent.
- Students receive good support from pastoral coaches. If they have any concerns, students feel that they know where to turn for support. Personal, social and health themes are covered in the programme of study at a level that is age appropriate. Rates of attendance are high for the majority of students. Students are consistently punctual to lessons.
- Leaders are aware of the slight inconsistencies between subjects and are working hard to ensure that all courses are equally strong. Even so, not all teachers yet have equally high expectations of what students can achieve.
- The standard of students' work is particularly high in art and design, English literature and product design. Students' workbooks show high teacher expectations and very strong progress in these subjects. The standards that students reach in some applied qualifications, including computing and business, are improving.
- Of particular note is the focus that leaders place on developing work and employability skills. Students develop a wide range of personal and social skills that enable them to overcome barriers to learning and to become more independent. All students benefit from very well-organised work experience. Business partners actively work with the school in developing students' employability and work-related skills. All students spend

two days a week engaged with local business. As a result, students quickly develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours that are valued by many employers. This prepares them well for progression into employment and/or further learning.

- By way of example, Year 13 art and design students on placement with a local marketing company needed to think deeply and develop their creative flair. They needed to contribute to a brand awareness campaign proposal designed for a prospective business client, which was a live requirement of this company.
- Students receive high-quality impartial advice and guidance. Careers advice includes guest speakers and visits to employers, job fairs and higher education institutions. Students have a well-developed understanding of where they are aiming for in relation to their career goals, and they feel well supported in their learning and while on work placement.

School details

Unique reference number	140965
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10087575

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

Type of school	Other secondary
School category	Academy studio school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	283
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	51
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	David Smith
Principal	Val Wigham
Telephone number	0191 4813710
Website	www.studiowestnewcastle.com
Email address	admin@studiowest.newcastle.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 January 2017

Information about this school

- Studio West is a studio school. It opened in September 2014. Much of the learning at the school is based on active collaboration between the school and over 220 business partners, who provide contexts in which pupils can develop and apply a range of skills, including teamwork, critical thinking and wider life skills.
- The school is undergoing some change. Currently, the school teaches pupils in Years 7, 8 and 11. There is also a sixth form teaching students in Years 12 and 13. In September 2019, the school will be open to pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9, and students in Year 13. From that point, the school will admit cohorts of pupils at the beginning of

Year 7 only. The sixth form will return to full operation once the current Year 8 pupils reach Year 12.

- The school is part of Kenton Schools Academy Trust. According to its scheme of delegation, the board of trustees has responsibility for the strategic direction of the trust, finance and staffing. The school's LGB has responsibility for Studio West's educational effectiveness and the curriculum on offer.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who join the school during key stage 4 other than at the usual time is currently well above the national average.
- The school works with outside providers as part of the curriculum on offer for pupils with specific needs. At the time of the inspection, these were: Newcastle Bridges School and OWN IT. This is in addition to the collaboration with business partners that is pivotal to the curriculum on offer to all pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed key stage 3 and key stage 4 pupils learning in classrooms. Inspectors observed learning jointly with the principal and discussed what was seen. Students in the sixth form were on professional placements at the time of the inspection. An inspector visited some of these placements and spoke to students as part of the inspection. Inspectors looked specifically at the work that sixth-form students were producing in a wide range of subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils when moving around the school between lessons and at social times. They talked to pupils in lessons about their experience at school and they looked at work in pupils' books. Inspectors talked to two specific groups of pupils to hear their views about the school and about the behaviour of other pupils. A separate group of sixth-form students were also spoken to at school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the chief executive officer, members of the trust and members of the LGB. Inspectors also spoke with senior and middle leaders, including those responsible for standards of behaviour and safeguarding. An inspector spoke with those responsible for the progress and support of pupils with SEND. Inspectors held meetings with those responsible for the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those responsible for providing careers information, advice and guidance. Meetings were held with those responsible for the sixth form.
- Inspectors took account of the 22 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. There were 33 responses over the past 365 days to Parent View, Ofsted's online parent questionnaire; these were taken into account. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documentation including: the school's view of its own performance; monitoring records; information about pupils' progress; improvement planning; and records of behaviour and attendance. They also considered the evidence provided by the school about the quality of provision in the sixth form. Inspectors looked closely at records relating to safeguarding and child protection, and at policies, including those published on the school's website.

Inspection team

Michael Wardle, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Victor Reid	Her Majesty's Inspector
Geoffrey Lumsdon	Ofsted Inspector

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