

Inspection of Longfield Academy

Longfield Road, Darlington DL3 0HT

Inspection dates:	15 and 16 October 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Inadequate

The Headteacher of this school is Angela Sweeten. This school is part of Northern Arch Learning Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Tim Fisher, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Iain Clyde.

What is it like to attend this school?

Longfield Academy has undergone significant change for the better. The culture is now one where pupils are happy, kind and friendly. Their interactions with adults and other pupils are respectful. Pupils have benefited from raised expectations of what they can achieve. In lessons pupils listen carefully and produce work to expected standards. Pupils understand that other people may have different views or beliefs.

Routines are now clearly understood and followed. These support all pupils to behave well. Staff and pupils report how much better behaviour now is and this can be seen in the orderly, calm school environment. Pupils move around the school well, quickly following staff instructions. On occasions when some pupils fail to meet these high standards, they are supported to reflect and improve. Pupils enjoy social time, where they continue to meet the school's high behavioural expectations.

Pupils are encouraged to contribute to the life of the school through earning 'pledges'. Many pupils are aspirational to achieve these, and most pupils earn several pledges each year. These are for activities such as being on the school council or becoming a peer

reader. Pupils also benefit from a carefully planned programme of enrichment experiences. Opportunities range from overseas visits to art and sports clubs.

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

Since the previous inspection, the school has made significant improvements. The school has ensured that pupils study an ambitious curriculum that is well suited to their needs. There is a broad range of subjects that pupils benefit from. This includes a number of vocational qualifications that prepare pupils to take up apprenticeships post-16. The school is working to stabilise the number of pupils who study the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects.

The curriculum skills and knowledge that pupils need to learn are clearly identified in the majority of subjects. This is being refined across the full curriculum. Teachers have the appropriate subject knowledge to teach the curriculum well. Pupils are helped to remember and build on their previous learning through regular recall tasks. Teachers routinely check what pupils remember and understand. In a few instances, the curriculum is not delivered as skilfully as the school intends. This means that pupils do not achieve as highly as they should in some subjects. Published outcomes for some subjects are lower than the school's ambition.

There are now clear processes to identify and support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers have high expectations of what these pupils should achieve. They are well trained to adapt their teaching to support pupils with SEND follow support plans in classrooms. The 'personalised learning centre' provides a calm learning environment for some pupils. Here, they receive specific support which ensures they are ready to learn and able to access the curriculum.

The school has effective systems for identifying what support pupils need to improve their reading. Additional reading sessions are matched effectively to the needs of the pupils. The wider love of reading is promoted enthusiastically across the school by staff. This includes 'The Masked Reader' competition which pupils enjoy and many pupils eagerly write their own poems.

The school's work with families has secured improvements in attendance for many pupils. However, for a small number, particularly those who are disadvantaged, low rates of attendance continue to prevent them from accessing the full curriculum.

A small number of pupils attend alternative provision. This is being used in the best interests of pupils. Leaders take responsibility for their safeguarding and well-being. However, the school does not have sufficient oversight of the curriculum for some of these pupils. The exact knowledge and skills these pupils should be studying are not shared well enough with the providers.

The school has ensured that an effective personal social and health education programme is in place. Over time, it helps pupils develop an understanding of key topics, such as the importance of healthy relationships and consent. Pupils are prepared well for life beyond

school. Work within the careers programme helps pupils make well-informed decisions about their next steps in education or training.

Leaders accurately identify what the school does well and what could be even better. The majority of parents and carers are positive about the changes at the school. Leaders are aware of the pressures on staff and have made measured changes to policies and practice to help reduce workload and support staff well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes the curriculum is not implemented well enough. As a result, some pupils have experienced gaps in their knowledge and not made as much progress in the curriculum as they could, including in examination outcomes. The school should continue to support staff in developing the curriculum knowledge and pedagogy to implement the curriculum effectively.
- School leaders have not ensured that the curriculum offered by the provider reflects the expectation of the curriculum offered for those individuals in school. This is because leaders have not communicated effectively with the provider about the learning pupils need to acquire. This means that some pupils do not learn the important knowledge and skills that they need for future success. Leaders should ensure that they communicate more effectively with staff at the alternative providers so that they have clear oversight of exactly what pupils are studying.
- Some pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, do not attend school regularly enough. As a result, they do not benefit from the curriculum and wider experiences offered by the school. The school should continue its work to ensure that all pupils have high rates of attendance.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	145577
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10297447
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	724
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Iain Clyde
CEO of the trust	Tim Fisher
Headteacher	Angela Sweeten
Website	longfield.nalp.org.uk
Date(s) of previous inspection	26 March 2024, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses five alternative providers for some pupils. Three are registered provisions and two are unregistered provisions.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 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. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, geography, science and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils in lessons and at social times. They spoke to pupils and staff about behaviour in the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of data about behaviour and attendance, including information about the use of alternative provision. An inspector visited one unregistered alternative provider with a school leader.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the local governing body, including the chair. They also met with directors from the trust and the CEO.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school, priorities for improvement and minutes of governors' meetings.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff were considered through discussions and a review of Ofsted's surveys, including Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Jessica McKay, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Angela White	Ofsted Inspector
John Downs	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Gammack	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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