

Inspection of Kirk Balk Academy

West Street, Hoyland, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S74 9HX

Inspection dates: 21–22 January 2020

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Kirk Balk pupils behave well and work hard. Teachers expect pupils to achieve high standards. Learning is rarely disrupted. This is because staff are consistent when they follow the academy's behaviour policy. Senior leaders provide effective support for teachers. They make regular checks on how pupils are behaving in lessons. They take swift action if necessary to ensure that pupils can learn in calm classrooms.

Pupils feel safe in school. They say that staff are always nearby at breaktimes or lunchtimes to act straight away if there are any problems. Bullying is rare. If it does happen, staff act fast to resolve any problems.

Teachers and leaders enjoy celebrating pupils' successes. Pupils are often praised in lessons. Sometimes the whole class applauds a good answer. On 'Proud Thursdays' senior leaders praise pupils' good work and their achievements.

Teachers offer pupils lots of extra-curricular activities. Many pupils complete pledges. This means they take part in activities such as trips, sports clubs or drama performances.

Staff encourage pupils to read a wide range of literature. There are 'drop everything and read' lessons every week. Lots of pupils choose a new book every term through the 'Reading Routes' programme. Pupils earn rewards for completing each book.

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

Teachers have planned a curriculum with colleagues from across the trust. It is now in place across key stage 3. The curriculum is ambitious; pupils are being asked challenging questions. This means pupils have to join together lots of different pieces of knowledge. They can do this because teachers have planned the learning well. Pupils build their knowledge over time. However, the curriculum is still new, and some older pupils have gaps in their knowledge.

The number of pupils choosing subjects such as modern languages has increased. Current pupils are achieving higher standards in these subjects. This is because of the curriculum changes leaders have made.

Teachers assess pupils' understanding well. Teachers ensure that pupils revisit any learning where their knowledge is not secure. Teachers expect pupils to try hard and to complete tasks to a high standard.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access the full curriculum. Teachers and support staff help pupils with SEND to achieve well. Some pupils also receive additional support outside the normal timetable. This helps them to learn. Disadvantaged pupils also achieve well across the curriculum. This is because teachers and leaders have high expectations of all pupils.

Learning is rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. Teachers follow the academy's behaviour policy well. They quickly spot pupils who stop working and get them back on track.

Leaders have introduced strategies to reduce exclusions, which were high in the past. Pupils now have more chances to improve their behaviour before staff use more serious sanctions. A small number of pupils do not always follow the rules, so leaders do use these sanctions. Some pupils learn away from their normal classroom. When this happens, specialist staff supervise and support them well.

Staff provide lots of activities to boost pupils' personal development. The curriculum contains 'life' lessons, which cover a broad range of themes. These lessons help pupils understand about British values and how to be safe and healthy. A small number of older pupils say they would like to learn more about the risks they could face outside of school. Pupils receive good careers guidance at Kirk Balk.

Staff are very positive about the support leaders provide. They value the way leaders tackle poor behaviour. Teachers also appreciate that leaders remove unnecessary tasks. They say that they use the time gained to plan better lessons.

Trust leaders help the local academy council perform well. Staff value the training the trust provides. Local governors use the trust's systems to hold leaders to account. They say planning with colleagues from other schools is helpful.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff make every effort to keep pupils safe. They work well with other local agencies, such as social services, if pupils are at risk. They offer lots of extra help for more vulnerable pupils.

All staff know how to recognise the signs that a young person may be at risk of harm. They also know how to report concerns. Leaders complete all the checks required before allowing staff to work with children.

Pupils learn about the risks they could face and how to stay safe. They know how to stay safe on-line and about the dangers of extremism.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils in key stage 4 have not accessed the new and improved curriculum that is in place for key stage 3 pupils. This means that some pupils still have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders should ensure that they continue to develop the quality of the

curriculum at key stage 4 so that it matches the ambition of the key stage 3 curriculum.

- The vast majority of pupils behave well. This is due to the behaviour policy and application of it. Leaders should now further improve pupils' behaviour so that pupils self-regulate and the need for sanctions reduces further.
- A small minority of pupils are excluded too often. This means that they miss valuable learning. Leaders should continue to refine and embed the range of strategies introduced recently to reduce exclusions further.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	140979
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	10121722
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	1250
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Matt Travis
Principal	Dean Buckley
Website	kba.northerneducationtrust.org
Date of previous inspection	27–28 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a member of Northern Education Trust. The board of trustees is the responsible body.
- The school was judged to require improvement at its last inspection in September 2017.
- Kirk Balk is a larger-than-average secondary school. The number of pupils on roll has grown in recent years.
- The school uses three providers of alternative education for a small number of pupils. These are Action2Change, Barnsley College and Barnsley local authority's EOTAS service, which educates children whose medical needs prevent them from attending school.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met members of the local academy council and the CEO of the trust.

- We met senior and subject leaders to discuss approaches to curriculum design, safeguarding, pupil premium spending, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- We checked the school's systems for vetting staff. This included a review of the single central record.
- We talked to staff and pupils about behaviour and safeguarding matters, including how concerns could be passed on and how to recognise potential risks. Pupils and staff were selected randomly for some meetings or discussions.
- A range of staff, including support staff and recently qualified staff, shared their views about pupils' behaviour and attitudes.
- Surveys for staff and parents were analysed. There were 47 responses from staff and 119 responses from parents. All were considered during the inspection. We also met with a parent.
- We reviewed policies and meeting records, including the academy's improvement plan and self-evaluation document. We reviewed the minutes from recent local academy council meetings. We also reviewed the trust's evaluation and planning documents.
- An inspector visited Action2Change, which is an alternative provision used by the academy.
- We checked the school's attendance and exclusion statistics and bullying logs.
- We visited on-site alternative provision, including those used to support pupils at risk of exclusion and those with SEND.
- We undertook deep dives into the following subjects: English, mathematics, science, history and modern foreign languages. This involved meetings with subject leaders, visits to lessons in these subjects, work scrutiny of books and other kinds of work produced by pupils, a discussion with teachers, and meeting groups of pupils from the lessons observed.
- We also visited lessons in other subjects, including design technology, geography and music.

Inspection team

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