

Inspection of Tanfield School

Tanfield Lea Road, Stanley, County Durham DH9 8AY

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 September 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Steven Clough. This school is part of Eden Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Kevin Brennan, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Garry Stout.

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a strong sense of community at Tanfield School. Pupils and staff talk proudly of being part of 'Team Tanfield'. The school's values of hard work, trust and fairness are understood by pupils and lived out every day. There are extremely high expectations of pupils. Staff share an unwavering determination to ensure that every pupil achieves their full potential. Pupils experience great success. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve very well in public examinations.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are taught to 'play by the rules' and they do. They are polite, courteous and welcoming to visitors. Pupils conduct themselves with impressive levels of maturity and self-control in lessons and around school. As a result, lessons are highly productive and free from distractions. Pupils are very happy at the school. They are confident that the school will respond quickly if they have any concerns.

The school offers pupils an exceptional programme to support their personal development. The opportunities that the school provide inspires pupils to learn more, take risks, be resilient and explore the world. Pupils are proud of the many ways they support their school and local community. The school is highly inclusive. Diversity is celebrated.

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

All pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), follow an ambitious curriculum. The school has carefully sequenced the important knowledge and skills that pupils should learn over time. For example, in English, pupils learn about increasingly complex ideas relating to power, gender and genre. They use these ideas to produce high-quality written work.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. The school has worked effectively with the trust when there has been a need for further subject specialists. Lessons consistently begin with retrieval tasks to help pupils remember what they have been taught before. Teachers use highly effective resources in lessons to support pupils' learning. Pupils with SEND are supported well. Teachers are provided with detailed information about pupils' needs. They use this information to ensure pupils with SEND achieve well.

Teachers assess pupils through 'active observations' in lessons. On occasion, teachers do not identify and address pupils' misconceptions fully. Pupils are given opportunities to 'turn and talk' in lessons. There is some variation in how effective these opportunities are in helping pupils to embed and develop their understanding.

The school has prioritised reading. Pupils enjoy reading for pleasure during morning meetings. The school has recently developed the school library. The school quickly identifies pupils who need extra support with their reading. An effective programme is in place to help these pupils to catch up.

Pupils' conduct is impeccable. Expectations and routines are embedded consistently well. Pupils move around the school site maturely and sensibly. The quality of pastoral care is a

strength of the school. Pupils are cared for deeply. Staff know families very well. This allows them to respond quickly and effectively if there are concerns. Pupils attend well. The school tracks pupils' attendance rigorously and takes swift action if it begins to falter.

The school's personal development programme is impressive. The school has taken action to ensure that all pupils, including pupils with SEND, benefit from wide-ranging opportunities that support their wider development. For example, pupils can learn sign language and robotics and can volunteer in the school and local community. They can develop their talents in sport and the arts. Pupils value the opportunity to learn more and develop skills in teamwork, communication and leadership. Outward-bound trips and international expeditions support pupils' character development and resilience. Pupils enjoy leadership roles such as reading ambassadors, head students and peer mentors. Pupils are taught effectively about healthy relationships. They understand how to stay safe online.

The school is led very well. The senior leadership team is highly skilled. Leaders have had a demonstrable impact in improving standards. They are driven by a moral purpose to ensure all pupils achieve success. Staff morale is high. Leaders support staff with their workload and well-being. For example, the school has adjusted its approach to marking. There is now a greater focus on providing feedback to pupils during 'active observations' when they work. Trustees and governors are committed to the school. They have an accurate understanding of its strengths and priorities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are some inconsistencies in the way the curriculum is implemented. This means that on occasion, in lessons, pupils do not get the opportunity to embed, apply and deepen their learning. The school should further develop the ways pupils discuss new concepts deeply to support their learning and ensure that teachers consistently identify and address any misconceptions that pupils have.

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	147894
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10346748
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	710
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Garry Stout
CEO of the trust	Kevin Brennan
Headteacher	Steven Clough
Website	tanfieldschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Eden Learning Trust, which is a multi-academy trust. The school joined the trust in May 2020.
- The school uses four registered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
- 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.

- 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 the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection team held meetings with the CEO, headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers and pupils.
- The lead inspector met with trustees and members of the local academy council.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors met with the leaders in charge of the personal, social, health and economic curriculum, careers education and pupils’ personal development.
- The inspectors observed pupils during social times.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 lead inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. He also took into consideration the responses to the surveys for staff and for pupils.

Inspection team

Dan McKeating, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
Karen Gammack	Ofsted Inspector
Joanne Owens	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Lewis	Ofsted Inspector

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