

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Catcote Academy

Catcote Road, Hartlepool TS25 4EZ

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 June 2025

Outcome

Catcote Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Lisa Greig. This school is part of Hartlepool Aspire Multi-Academy 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), also Lisa Greig, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Helen Gordon.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy, safe and thrive at Catcote. They are supported by a warm, welcoming staff team who care deeply for them. The school has an excellent understanding of the individual needs of pupils. Its ethos of 'we focus on what we can do' is clear in pupils' achievements. Pupils regularly exceed the school's high expectations.

The school's curriculum pathways are tailored to the specific needs of pupils. There is a strong emphasis on preparation for life beyond school. Pupils are taught how to stay safe and to care for themselves and others. They work towards developing their independence and important skills for adult life very well.

Pupils access a truly exceptional and impressive careers programme. They have meaningful opportunities to experience the world of work. Pupils benefit from opportunities to sample work on site, through the 'Catcote Crew'. Many pupils and students in the sixth form then go on to access work placements in the community.

Behaviour is exemplary in lessons and during social times. Pupils are supported to recognise and regulate their emotions and do so very successfully. Pupils are polite, kind and respectful of adults and their peers. They value their time at school and develop strong friendships.

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

The school has an established and rich curriculum. It is structured carefully and effectively to support pupils to achieve the best possible outcomes. Pupils access an ambitious curriculum that is closely linked to all aspects of their development. The school accurately identifies pupils' needs so that they access the right curriculum pathway. For example, in the sixth form learning is closely linked to real-life scenarios to prepare students to live as independently as possible.

Teachers have immensely positive relationships with pupils and praise them regularly for their efforts. Teachers explain concepts clearly. They regularly revisit learning to check what pupils remember. Teachers address gaps in pupils' prior knowledge swiftly. Pupils are confident in their learning and can take risks. For example, in mathematics the learning is carefully structured to allow all to succeed and build on what they know and can do.

Staff support pupils to achieve their individual targets, linked to their education, health and care (EHC) plan. Targets are regularly tracked and reviewed so that they remain appropriate. Communication is a priority for the school. Highly skilled staff support pupils to communicate effectively with others. Pupils have regular reading sessions and have access to a range of texts. Throughout the school there is a love of reading and pupils enjoy the literature that they interact with. However, a few pupils do not get consistent enough support to develop their understanding of phonics. This limits how quickly these pupils learn to read.

Pupils make tangible and highly positive contributions to life in and beyond school. Staff use a '4 R's' (relate, regulate, reflect, repair) structure to develop pupils' understanding of positive behaviour. Pupils respond well to embedded routines and clear expectations. Their attitudes to learning are exceptionally positive.

Attendance is high. The school has clear and robust systems for managing attendance. Staff work closely and effectively with families to make sure pupils attend school regularly.

The school teaches pupils to be confident, unique and resilient. Pupils show the fundamental British values in their daily life. For example, they cherish each other and appreciate their differences. They enjoy the regular events and the opportunities to perform to an audience, such as in the 'trashion show'. Older pupils and students in the sixth form access opportunities beyond school, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme and additional work experience.

Preparation for adulthood is a priority for the school. Pupils learn employability skills such as how to complete a job application and interview skills. They have regular opportunities to explore the world of work. Pupils access on-site work experience, for example, in the coffee shop or administration team. Many pupils progress to working in the school's community café and retail outlet. A wide range of local employers provide further opportunities to experience the world of work. Pupils' character is developed exceptionally well, helping them to become more confident and ready for their next steps.

Staff say that the school cares about their workload and well-being. They speak highly about the support and opportunities they receive to develop their practice and expertise. Senior leaders have driven improvements since the last inspection. They have ensured that change has been truly pupil focused and sustainable.

Trustees have a clear understanding of the school. They provide effective challenge and support. This helps to ensure that the school continues to improve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The support for pupils developing their phonics knowledge is not as consistent as it needs to be. Some pupils do not learn to read with the confidence and fluency that they are capable of. The school should ensure that pupils with gaps in their phonics knowledge are supported effectively to become fluent readers that will enable them to succeed further.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the third ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Catcote School, to be good for overall effectiveness in March 2013.

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	139976
Local authority	Hartlepool Borough
Inspection number	10379385
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	60
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Helen Gordon
Headteacher	Lisa Greig (also chief executive officer)
Website	www.catcoteacademy.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	3 and 4 March 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of Hartlepool Aspire Multi-Academy Trust.
- Catcote Academy provides for pupils who have a wide range of special educational needs including moderate learning difficulties; severe learning difficulties; profound and multiple learning disability; autism spectrum disorder; and social, emotional or mental health needs.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school provides education based at three locations. One is situated on Brierton Road and another at Throston, where some sixth form students receive their education. The third location is Catcote Academy, where pupils in key stage 3 and 4 are based along with some sixth form students.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

- 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

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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.
- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors held discussions with trustees, including the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors visited the three education sites that the school runs, as well as two locations operated by the trust that are used to support pupils' preparation for adulthood.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to behaviour, bullying and attendance.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including leaders' plans to improve the school and their self-evaluation of the school's work.
- Inspectors took account of responses to Ofsted's staff survey. Inspectors considered the responses shared through Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. An inspector also met with a small group of parents.

Inspection team

Richard Wakefield, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Dan McKeating

His Majesty's Inspector

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